

F A N N Y:

A

N O V E L;

IN A

SERIES OF LETTERS.

WRITTEN BY A LADY.

IN THREE VOLUMES.

VOL. II.

L O N D O N:

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SERIES OF LETTERS



NOV 11

L O N D O N

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FANNY:

A NOVEL.

LETTER XLVII.

LORD DAVENANT, TO FRANCIS FITZHENRY, ESQ.

HAIL Virtue! thou only source of permanent felicity! whose balm can soften every woe, and guard the human heart from the piercing stings of remorse.

The days of my folly are past, and the hour of punishment is arrived—Oh, my friend! little are you acquainted with the present frame of my mind, if you think me capable of relapsing into these scenes of vice and dissipation, from which the virtuous Fanny has rescued

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me;

me; and which an interview I have just quitted, has stamped with such unprecedented horrors, as would humanize the heart even of a Lovelace.

I quitted Ostend, and proceeded to Paris, according to my intentions, where I frequented all the public spectacles, in order, if possible, to dissipate a melancholy which I shall never conquer; at one of which, I was this night, to my infinite concern, recognised by the Chevalier de Villiard. I dreaded a rencontre with the Marchioness his daughter: to you my reasons must be sufficiently obvious: my disposition is not at present suited to an amour, which even at the gayest time of my life, in moments of reflection brought with it compunction.

It has often been a subject of astonishment to me, that old De Villiard was the only person insensible of the ill conduct of his daughter. The Marquis, I am convinced, was not unacquainted with the frailty of his wife, but he had too much of the French man in his disposition, to suffer such a bagatelle to destroy the serenity of his mind, or to call forth his resentment.

resentment; whilst her father, equally blind to his daughter's imperfections and mine, was continually pouring the most liberal acts of friendship on my unworthy head.—What a villain was I, thus to trample on such a tie!—infamously to disregard every claim of hospitality, gratitude, and honour:—reflection maddens me, and the pang that shot athwart my breast, when I first beheld the injured Chevalier, may perhaps be imagined, but baffles every power of description: he ignorantly nourishing the worm in his bosom, with earnest intreaties forced me along with him—intreaties that were unanswerable.—Enquiries after the welfare of his family were unavoidable, and were made in trembling,—of which the apprehension of hearing of the Marchioness de Chamont was the cause—but conceive my sensations, when I was informed, that the pretty, the innocent Avigne was no more; a deep sigh involuntarily escaped me, which her unhappy father perceiving (laying his hand upon mine) he exclaimed “Ah! my lord, I see you feel for the poor lost Avigne—

“ Oh! had you felt for her when liv-
“ ing, as I have wished, I might have
“ been blest at this moment with the
“ presence of my daughter, in the wife
“ of my friend.”

“ For heaven’s sake, my dear Sir—
“ what can you mean?”

“ Alas! my Lord! I mean that it was
“ you whom she loved; it was you for
“ whom she grieved and died. From
“ the time of your departure, her health
“ began visibly to decline, her spirits
“ and appetite forsook her; she com-
“ plained not of any pain, yet did her
“ strength daily decay; all medicines
“ proved ineffectual, which she took in
“ compliance with our requests, at the
“ same time declaring, that her disorder
“ came not within their reach:—from
“ many circumstances we feared the ma-
“ lady was upon her mind; her mother and
“ myself incessantly urged her to unbo-
“ som herself, and place in us an unli-
“ mited confidence, unitedly protest-
“ ing, that no efforts on either part
“ should be left un essayed to restore her
“ peace and tranquillity: she constantly
“ evaded

“ evaded a reply to our intreaties, till
“ within three days of her decease,
“ when she called us to her bed-side,
“ and confessed, that a secret passion for
“ your Lordship had preyed upon her
“ spirits, and had brought her to the
“ gates of death, which was her only
“ hope, since life could not be enjoyed
“ with you. Yes, my dear girl, cried
“ I, Live!—live and be the wife of
“ Lord Davenant; he is worthy of you:
“ there is no one for whom I have a
“ greater respect and esteem. I will
“ write to him immediately; he always
“ admired you, and will be happy in
“ returning with warmth your gene-
“ rous and disinterested affection.”

“ Ah, my much honoured father,”
returned the dying innocent, “ ’tis now
“ too late for any efforts in my favour, or
“ nothing should have extorted from me
“ this confession; for I beseech you to be-
“ lieve me, when I declare, that death is
“ far more welcome to your Avigne, than
“ the solicited addresses even of Lord Da-
“ venant:” besides, continued she, “ there
“ is an obstacle, an insurmountable bar,

“ which, was I to live, and possess his af-
“ fections, would for ever obstruct our
“ union; I pray you ask me not what ob-
“ stacle, for it is a secret that must be bu-
“ ried with me in the silent tomb.—I can
“ say no more, only as my last request, I
“ intreat you not to repeat this conversa-
“ tion to my sister. So saying, the poor
“ girl sunk upon her pillow, and scarcely
“ spoke after. Her last injunction astonish-
“ ed me, nevertheless, I will conform to
“ it with the utmost strictness. The Mar-
“ quis and Marchioness, were, at the time
“ of her death at Rome, where they still
“ continue, and I suppose will remain
“ during the carnival.”

At the conclusion of this dreadful nar-
rative, I, the wretched author of these
calamities, remained motionless. When
I recovered the power of speech, I ex-
claimed, “ Let me instantly remove an
“ object, who in return for your kind-
“ ness and hospitality, has entailed upon
“ you affliction, the sight of whom,
“ must corrode every wound, and to
“ every pain give new poignance.”
“ No, my friend,” most kindly, but
piercingly

piercingly to my conscience, returned he.—“ No, my Lord!—whilst you are
“ innocently, though unfortunately the
“ cause of my anguish, think not that I
“ am capable of accusing you, for that in
“ which the will was not concerned.”

Oh! how gladly would I at that moment have cast myself at his feet and confessed my crimes, had I alone been concerned in them; what a relief it would have been to my mind, to have owned my guilty connection with his eldest daughter the Marchioness de Chamont, and my ridiculous trifling with his youngest, by which I traiterously gained her affections, and have deprived her of life. How much less painful would have been all the invectives with which he would then have loaded me, compared to his present kindness, of which I feel myself so unworthy.

I have escaped for this night, an interview with Madame de Villiard; for declaring that I was utterly unable to present myself before that lady, after being the cause of her misery, I persisted in a determination of returning to my
B 4 lodgings,

lodgings, instead of accompanying the Chevalier, who notwithstanding, drew from me a promise of dining with him to-morrow, by which time he would prepare his lady for my reception.

Oh! my friend! how amply is Miss Clifton revenged; think you not, that in despite of all my misdeeds, her gentle heart would bestow some pity on me, was she informed of my present sufferings?—No! she was only acquainted with one grain, out of the full measure of my guilt, yet was she inexorable! yet did she inflict upon me the greatest of all punishments.

I received your letter—my suspicions then were not groundless;—Fanny marries the happy Beville!—every aggravation of anguish I am devoted to sustain.—May she be happy, whilst misery is the decreed portion of your

DAVENANT.

I am much obliged by the trouble you have taken in the affairs of poor Sutton, though they had nearly escaped my memory—how prevalent is the despicable
object

object self—how mean and unmanly to bury the remembrance of our friends in the concerns of ourselves; yet where is the man whose conscience can acquit him of having ever fallen into the same error.

LETTER XLVIII.

MISS FANNY CLIFTON TO LADY LOUISA STAFFORD.

HA! ha! ha! a droll adventure indeed—pride is ever sure to meet with its deserts.

First let me congratulate myself on the acceleration of your ladyship's arrival, which indeed gives me the sincerest pleasure!—and then to my story.

This morning, as I was pensively and quietly seated at my tambour, a rap at the door announced a visitor—and presently, a Miss Watson appeared with all the fantastic airs of *bon ton*, saying to the servant as she entered, “you’ll inform “her ladyship that I am here.” I rose to receive her with all the politeness I possessed, but in return for my well meant

civility, I was honoured with such a disregarding contemptuous move, that I resumed my seat and employment with an equal degree of *sang froid*, whilst she threw herself upon a sofa, from whence she flew to the glass to adjust her cap, and admire the beautiful object it presented, and seemed so perfectly pleased with the *tout ensemble* of her appearance, that in the overflowings of her self-complacency, she vouchsafed to accost your poor humble, silent Fanny, who was quite overpowered, and almost aghast at this wonderful display of *ease* and *elegance*.

“That is a very pretty pattern that you are working indeed Miss,” said she. “You are a friend of Lady Wilson’s, I presume.”

“Yes, madam,” returned I, “I have that honour”—“Aye, aye, child, I concluded you was an humble friend of her ladyship’s, who I dare say”—“Yes, madam,” interrupted I, “I repeat that I esteem myself honoured in the friendship of Lady Wilson, and I likewise flatter myself, that I have some claim to the title of humility:—

“and

“ and hope, at the same time, that it
“ will ever be accompanied, with a
“ spirit, sufficient to return insolence
“ with the contempt it deserves.”

So saying, I withdrew, and flew up stairs swelled with pride and vexation. It must be the true spirit of contradiction that could exalt me so much in my own opinion, at the very moment I found myself debased in that of other people. In this situation I met Lady Wilson upon the stairs, and brimful of resentment, I related to her the cause of my chagrin; she soon became as full of indignation as myself, and exclaimed: “ I wonder
“ how the little insignificant durst give
“ herself such unbecoming airs. How
“ soon people forget themselves, Miss
“ Watson’s father, was a very few years
“ ago a contractor to government, by
“ which, with the help (as it is hinted)
“ of very dark practices, he acquired his
“ wealth and knighthood. I warrant
“ you I’ll soon make the lady sensible
“ of her insolence, and inform her who
“ she has insulted.”—She then proceeded to her visitor, and I to my chamber,

B 6 where,

where, ruminating upon what was past, I soon became conscious that I had disgraced myself by a serious resentment of so immaterial a circumstance. The impertinence of Miss Watson could not have cast any reflection upon me, had my own conduct been unexceptionable. How gladly would I have undergone the same mortification to have recalled my own folly! How cautious and guarded should we be to repel the sudden emotions that will arise in every breast that is possessed of acute and lively feelings. That sensibility, which by the generality of the world is esteemed a blessing, I regard as the greatest curse that can befall us—Is it not the cause of our greatest errors? Is it not continually leading us into difficulties; and depriving us of the power to support them with firmness? It not only encreases every real calamity, but raises imaginary ones: the feeling heart is pained by trifles, which by an opposite character is either heedlessly passed over, or regarded as an excitement to mirth: in short, not a word that is uttered, or a transaction that happens, but will

will reverberate on the feeling mind, and draw forth an answering union of pleasure or pain. It is often argued in favour of sensibility, that it finds an ample reward in the former, for what it suffers by the latter: did the sweets of life turn the scale, it would be a considerable evidence in favour of such reasoning; but whilst its evils so greatly preponderate, according to my poor judgment, it entirely confutes it. For my part, I deny its utility here, but whilst I regard it not as one of this worlds advantages, I fervently hope and trust that it is given as a rod to chastise, and render us more acceptable in that which is to come, which must certainly stamp its value far above an earthly benefit.—You know I can moralize now and then, therefore cease your astonishment, and return with me to Lady Wilson: yet upon second thoughts I will not repeat her conversation with Miss Watson. It is ungenerous to exult over a defeated enemy, and you may believe me when I assure you, that I felt more concern than pleasure from her humiliation.

Mais

Mais écoutez Mademoiselle, 'tis not the whole *beau monde* that thus looks down upon your Fanny; notwithstanding my recent mortification, I have the *douceur* of having made a conquest—and such a conquest as must exalt me to the very summit of the *ton*, and strike my whole sex with the deadly sting of envy. The gay, the elegant, the fashionable Lord Fitzroy owns the power of my irresistible charms, and courts my acceptance of his admired self, and splendid fortune, which he has not yet had *time* to diminish.

Is it known to you that the honourable Edward Barton, to whom a certain letter was addressed, which luckily fell into the hands of a certain lady, by which she escaped the most diabolical scheme that ever was planned, is now become a peer of the realm. Not a peerless peer I fear—would that he was for the good of the state. This redoubtable hero, is now, however, ycleped Fitzroy.

Your ladyship, I hope, will do me the honour of appearing as bride maid on this occasion. I must consult his
lordship

lordship whether it will be most elegant to set the town in a blaze, or to have the ceremony performed incog—his judgment is indisputable: his word has as much weight with the world as it has even with myself.

I protest, I begin to think the sound of your ladyship is very delightful!—Pray, don't you find it so? perhaps not! I suppose it is lost upon you, who have been accustomed to it from your birth—'tis I, on whom it breaks, as the sun from behind a cloud, that can be thoroughly sensible of its whole infinity of charms.

Your ladyship's arrival at this juncture will be vastly apropos, as I shall want your assistance in the choice of my silks, &c. &c.

Jesting apart, according to my professions of candour and sincerity, I have refused this idol of the day, and in terms not to be mistaken: notwithstanding my cruelty, he vows he must continue to adore me.—All women like to be adored you know, so contenting myself with having repeated that my sentiments are
unalter-

unalterable, I suffer him still to adore. He serves to pick up my fan, carry my coffee, attend me in public, and above all, gives me an opportunity of displaying my power, and triumphing over the Carlises and Watsons.

Adieu. With your next comes a lecture on coquetry!—Nay, pray you send it not, pack it up in your portmanteau—let me rejoice in your presence, and I will defy your anger. I cannot help admiring my own disinterestedness—what woman think you would solicit the company of so dangerous a rival, with the same sincerity as your

FANNY CLIFTON.

LETTER XLIX.

MISS PARKER TO MISS CLIFTON.

YOU ask me for my confidence!—Can Miss Clifton make a request which I ought to refuse?—Yes, my friend, notwithstanding the love I bear you, and the obligations I owe you, I wish with my whole soul, that I had the power

power to withhold from you, the secret your penetration has discovered: still should it be preserved inviolate—still should it remain the unobserved, though painful resident of my wounded bosom. No friend to sympathize in my pain, or lament, whilst they must perforce condemn my presumption.

Can you my dearest, and most valued friend—can you, upon a moment's reflection, wish me to indulge a passion, which, if it exists, must inevitably entail upon me misery? Young as I am, I have been already visited by the withered form of affliction; “I am the
“ child of adversity, and misfortune has
“ marked me for her own;”—ought I then by madly encouraging a romantic attachment, which almost every human obstacle opposes, dress her myself in a new garb of terror, and point out to her a new path of approach.

One cause is indeed removed, a circumstance which, believe me, I most sincerely regret; had my wishes proved effectual, my own troubles would have been buried in the felicity of two people.

ple, whose welfare is far dearer to me than life.

Oh, Miss Clifton! what a vague term is happiness; every one is acquainted with, and enamoured of the name, yet no one knows the form, colour, or complexion that it wears; it is a phantom every one hopes to obtain, yet do they seek it by different tracts, and scarcely two can be found, who agree about the shape in which they expect to find it.— In short,ameleon like, it catches the reflection of every one's imagination, and eludes the grasp of its most sedulous pursuers.

The difference of our sentiments on the same subject, has led me to these reflections on happiness. Is it not a striking illustration of the above, that when, according to my fancy, it presented itself to you, in the fairest form of human perfection, you scorned and rejected it.

Excuse my gravity, it is ill-timed, though perhaps like olives before wine, it may give a superior goût to the gaiety by which you are surrounded. You will
accuse

accuse me of stealing a thought from Mrs. Cowley; I allow the charge, and frankly acknowledge, that I am happy when I can make up for the dearth of my own imagination, by the more fertile brain of another.

I have not yet recovered your departure, nor can I describe to you how much I feel the loss of your society.

The whole Beville family treat me with great politeness, for which accept my thanks: I am not insensible that their civility to me is a tribute to you. Before the happy æra of our acquaintance, their behaviour towards me wore the appearance of a compassionate condescension, such as displays itself under the title of humanity, and whilst it gives the severest wound to a feeling mind, expects in return the utmost gratitude and submission. The change pleases me; it certainly is no gratification to self-love, but it is a considerable one to that fervent friendship which I flatter myself holds the precedency in the heart of your Maria; and that, as Sigismunda says of a different passion, “is more than selfish vanity.”

vanity."—Justice requires that I except Mr. Beville from this censure: the day I first saw him, was that of my first meeting with you.—What a critical moment! How happy in the last instance! How adverse in the former. You have been a witness of the civility with which he has ever since honoured me.

You are an universal favourite in this city, particularly of the family I have just mentioned; all must be approved, that you approve; all must be genteel that you admire; all must be worthy that you esteem. This is an adulation that you despise—and the less you regard it, the longer you will retain it; and your poor Maria being honoured with your friendship, catches some of those rays which beam upon you.

The other morning Mr. Beville and his sister honoured me with a visit: your miniature, drawn by yourself, lay upon the table. They spent some time with me, and entered into a familiar friendly conversation. Miss Beville talked much of the last assembly, related several little anecdotes, told me the parti-
culars

ticulars of every person's dress, and enlarged upon the agreeable qualifications of her partner, a stranger of whom I hear she has made a conquest; her brother said little, and when he did speak, it was evidently an exertion, to save the appearance of peculiarity.

They spent about an hour with me: the miniature remained unobserved, till rising to depart, a passing glance caught your well known features; Mr. Beville instantly seized your little performance, and held it several minutes, with his eyes rivetted in silent rapture, then replacing it, praised the accuracy of the artist, and enquired his name: my answer raised his astonishment; his sister likewise expressed her surprize, though she at the same time declared, that she thought you excelled in all kind of accomplishments.

As Mr. Beville took his leave, he pressed my hand, and said, I see Miss Parker you sympathize in my pain; we mutually lament the loss of the too charming Miss Clifton: he looked as if he wished to say more, but checking himself, he joined his sister, who waited
for

for him. In the evening I received the following note.

TO MISS PARKER,

“ Dear Madam,

“ You are not unacquainted with the
“ state of my heart, nor is your own a
“ stranger to compassion; to its tender
“ feelings therefore I must appeal for
“ an excuse for my present temerity, for
“ the presuming request I am about
“ to make.

“ On your table I saw a miniature of
“ the too charming Miss Clifton!—I
“ gazed at it! could one view suffice to
“ satisfy one so deeply enamoured of the
“ fair original? How could I suppress
“ an intruding inclination to repeat it?
“ Oh! Miss Parker, if your gentle breast
“ was ever warmed by the tender passion
“ of love, it will plead my excuse, when
“ I venture to petition for one week’s
“ possession of the lovely likeness of your
“ friend—if you had ever felt the stings
“ of an hopeless attachment, (which I
“ implore heaven that you never may)
“ your

“ your heart would bleed for your sincere
“ friend and humble servant,

“ EDWARD BEVILLE.”

Guess my sensations upon reading this extraordinary billet—but it is a task even beyond the abilities of Miss Clifton. I was happily alone when I received it; what would have become of me had any body witnessed the emotions it occasioned, for they were far too violent to be suppressed. Oh! Beville! indeed! indeed! I can, and do pity you! little do you think what a fellow sufferer you have in the wretched Maria. Indeed I cannot help accusing you of cruelty; can a callous, an adamant heart be associated with so many perfections; ah, no! your mind is replete with feeling and sensibility, it bleeds with its own pores, and shares in those of its friends, and whilst it is compelled to wound the unfortunate Beville, itself recoils at the blow.

Can you forgive your friend for a weakness that I attempt not to defend, but confess, to avoid falling into a greater

error: I yielded to the petition, and sent your picture enclosed in a short note, in which I expressed myself wretchedly; I never felt more at a loss: I wrote several before I could please myself, and at last thought I had sent the worst. I fear you will chide me, I durst not wait for your sanction, afraid of a refusal: yet had I seen any impropriety in the compliance, nothing should have bribed me to have consented to it. To a gentleman of so much honour as Mr. Beville, and to one so highly esteemed even by yourself; am I totally inexcusable? How fleeting are the resolves of us weak mortals, I had imposed upon myself an inviolable silence on this subject, yet it has alone employed my pen, and filled up the whole of this enormous packet.

You, no doubt, think me most provokingly unfeeling in not having once mentioned the poor exile, Lord Davenant—what can I say on the subject—charity, we are taught, covers a multitude of sins, and if you think it sufficiently cancels those of Lord Davenant, nothing remains to oppose your happiness: on the
contrary,

contrary, if you are determined as you say, not to relax from your resolves, follow my advice, endeavour to forget him, and banish every thing which can recall him to your memory.

“ Ah! Maria!” you exclaim—“ how easy is it to preach—how difficult to practice—remember the old adage, example is better than precept.” I acknowledge the justice of the sentence; but consider the difference of our situations; you have absence, you have gaiety, a succession of amusements, and in short, every thing that can divert the mind, and tend to support your resolution: whilst every thing conspires to overthrow that of your unfortunate friend. I am continually exposed to the presence of Mr. Beville, and my ears are perpetually imbibing the subtle poison of his praises.

Pray continue to write to me journal-wise; let us confine ourselves to the present, without regarding the past or the future.

Think not that because I have not yet thanked you for your lively descrip-

tion of your present life, that I am ungrateful for the entertainment it afforded me; believe me, it has a charm sufficient to recommend it, which is, that it may excite a laugh, but cannot give a moment's pain, either to yourself or your sincere and devoted friend,

MARIA PARKER.

LETTER L.

MR. FITZHENRY TO LORD DAVENANT.

YOUR punishment is indeed severe: my heart commiserates your sufferings, and bleeds for the lost Avigne—had you attended to my admonitions!—I warned you.—Alas! I may now say that I likewise was admonished, and that I also rejected advice; and in consequence thereof, I am like your lordship, falling down the precipice of my own folly. You told me, that married happiness was incompatible with indifference, and that love was an indispensable requisite: I am too late become sensible

sensible of its power: I acknowledge its sovereignty, and feel its despotism.

Stimulated by the chimerical idea I had vainly cherished in my own wild imagination, that indifference was a more lasting foundation for permanent happiness than a romantic passion, I wrote to Sir Clement, and received an answer—*too* gracious—an answer, which I then thought would contribute to my happiness, but which is now become its bane. In his letter, he pressed me to hasten my visit to London, saying, that there was no answering for girls; that they might be caught by tinsel, whilst they were waiting for the more solid ore. I took the hint, and sallied forth on this anti-quixotical plan.

On my journey I found an ample amusement in contemplating my future prospects, in which I saw painted numberless and various schemes of domestic happiness.—Vain and delusive dreams! formed by my creative fancy—and at once destroyed by an unexpected adventure.

Notwithstanding the obscurity in which the adverse fates, have at present confined your risible faculties I think I can as it were instinctively perceive a smile upon your countenance at the old reprobated cynic, with his prudential systems, being at length involved in an adventure.

Ascending a hill between St. Alban's and Barnet, I passed two servants, well mounted and in handsome liveries, who were so much intoxicated, that they with difficulty kept their seats; upon reaching the summit I perceived a carriage overturned at about a quarter of a mile distance, upon which I made my driver use his utmost speed to their assistance, and upon my arrival found one of the postillions unable to move, though unhurt, under the horses, whilst the other was hauling out of the window a good looking abigail, who no sooner found herself in safety, than she began to scream "Oh! my lady! my lady! my poor sweet lady is certainly killed!" When a voice faintly cried, "for heaven's sake help me!"

Inspired

Inspired merely by the common impulses of humanity, I flew to afford her that relief which the perils of her situation so immediately demanded.

I released the fainting fair one from the overturned vehicle, supported her to the next bank, and in relieving her, delivered myself to slavery; her uncommon beauty, even whilst it appeared inanimate, had power almost in one single glance to rout my long boasted stoicism.

For some time a gentle respiration was the only proof that she was not already become a victim to the merciless and irresistible hand of death.

My faculties indeed were almost equally suspended, and my every sensation was enveloped in a reverential kind of awe towards my lovely burthen, who I at that moment regarded as a celestial divinity, but was supremely happy in a short time, by the revival of her precious senses, to find she had not "winged her flight" to those realms for which her angelic form seemed most designed. Upon her recovery, finding herself in the arms of a stranger, she started, and I was com-

pelled to resign the only woman who can ever be the author of my happiness—perhaps for ever.

She was placed in my carriage, into which her maid followed her, and they drove off without my being once favoured with the sound of her voice, her fright having rendered it wholly inarticulate.

I mounted one of the servant's horses, and attended them, sending one forward to Barnet, to secure proper accommodations, where I had the happiness of handing out the new found arbitress of my fate, who I had by that time learnt was Lady Louisa Stafford, only daughter and heiress of that wretch, the Earl of Belmont, which will prove an additional bar to that which I had myself so ingeniously formed.

Owing to this delay upon the road, we did not arrive at the inn before seven, and her ladyship, whose spirits had not recovered their agitation and fatigue, retired immediately; however, in conducting her to her apartment, I received a most gracious permission to make my enquiries after her health, in person,
in

in the morning. She politely said, she should be happy in having the power to testify her gratitude to a gentleman, who had so generously and humanely afforded assistance to a stranger in distress.

Upon reflection, I abused myself for having made a request which I fancied must destroy every pretence for visiting her in town. In short, upon a review of my own situation, with that of the lady, I found so many obstacles to my happiness, that I am entirely bereft of every gleam of comfort.

What to do with the Carlisle's I know not, rather than marry one woman, whilst I am in love with another, I would instantly lodge an ounce of lead in my misleading brain, as the least evil of the two.

This difficulty, therefore, great as it is, must be removed; but then, to look upon the other, is like looking upon the boundless ocean, without the knowledge of navigation. How can I ever acquire the consummate assurance to to aspire to the heiress of Lord Belmont.

How must my pride be humbled, before it can bear to be stigmatized with the mean and despicable title of a fortune-hunter.

How have I ever despised superfluous wealth, particularly where it fetters the human mind in the principal and most essential concern of life. Was love even to gain such an ascendancy in my breast, as to stifle at once the sentiments of modesty and pride, what must I expect in return for my temerity, but that rejection which I should so justly deserve.

It will certainly be less disrespectful to the charms of Miss Carlisle, to declare my situation, whilst I am unacquainted with them, then to decline the honour of her alliance after an interview: therefore, at all events, I shall call upon Sir Clement immediately upon my arrival in town, and openly declare the cause of this sudden alteration in my sentiments, without mentioning the name of the lady, or the attendant circumstances. It will be an awkward business undoubtedly, but no man is without

without his evil hours, and whilst I have so industriously brought this upon myself, I have no right to repine.

I have a blessed night before me; I may lay my body down to rest, but but my mind will continue in a tumult. I would sit up all night musing and writing by turns, but that I am sensible that one night's watching would imprint upon my countenance the character of a rake; and as some young bloods are, as they call it, kicking up a riot in the house, and disturbing every body, her ladyship would naturally conclude I was one of the party.

It is frequently said, that love makes all men coxcombs, and is a remark which I now feel strongly verified in myself; I, at this moment, am more anxious for my appearance in the morning, than a belle on a birth night.

I will write again soon; would to heaven that I could say, when I shall be disentangled from my present difficulties, but they are more like to accumulate than to decrease. You will now I hope admit, that I am a proper corres-

pondent for your lordship, though I sincerely hope that your embarrassinent may be upon the decline, whilst it is only the commencement of those of your's

F. FITZHENRY.

LETTER LI.

LADY LOUISA STAFFORD, TO THE COUNTESS OF BELMONT.

GROSVENOR-SQUARE.

OWING to an alarming accident, which, however, from the kindness and humanity of a stranger, who was like myself travelling towards London, was rendered insignificant, I did not arrive here till noon this day.

On the road between St. Alban's and Barnet, our horses took fright and ran away; the consequence of which was, that upon the first stone that separated the path-way from the carriage road, we were overturned. Be not alarmed, my dear madam, for believe me, there was no injury sustained whatever, except
by

by one of the poor horses, whose wound will detain the servants here some days: I fear the receipt of a post letter, whilst you are expecting their return, will surprise and alarm you, but suspense would keep you in continual fear.

We lay some time, almost insensible, without any assistance, the coachman and postillion being too much stunned with their fall to yield us any, and the other two were loitering behind: I promised, (though I would not consent to conceal their behaviour) to intercede for your pardon of their neglect, which is a favour I hope you will grant to my request.

These digressions have prevented me too long from indulging my pen in praising our kind Samaritan, a subject to which gratitude prompts me: he found us in the situation I have described, from which he spared no trouble to extricate us. After having kindly waited till life, of which the fright had for some time deprived me, was restored, having ordered his servants to assist in replacing our damaged carriage on its

wheels, he handed me into his own, and attended on horse back to Barnet, where I have reason to believe, he remained that night, merely from the charitable motive of seeing that I was properly attended, and that I received every care and assistance that my agitated spirits required, as in a few minutes after I arrived, I was visited by a neighbouring physician, in consequence of his orders, by whose advice I was bled. Mr. Fitzhenry called upon me this morning before I left the inn, and politely urged me to make use of his carriage for the remainder of my journey; but I could not consent so far to trespass on his civility: before we parted he begged leave to visit me in London, a request, which having no reason to refuse, I granted: it would not have been proper to have received visits in Lady Wilson's house, or indeed any other, from a person of whose character I was ignorant; but this gentleman proved to be Mr. Fitzhenry, of W—— who has lately buried his father, and in whose praise fame is so uncommonly vociferous, an instance in
which

which it does not seem to make use of its imputed privilege: his address is easy and elegant, and his countenance prepossessing; in short, his character and appearance made me think, that if I had a sister, he was just the kind of man I should wish to become my brother.

I found Lady Wilson and my friend Fanny much surprised and alarmed at my non-appearance upon the day appointed—Miss Clifton declined an engagement to spend the evening with her friend—Her ladyship offered me the same compliment, but I am sure she would have been much mortified had I accepted it—she lives only in a crowd! Fanny begins to complain of the incessant dissipation of a town life.—What a different scene of life awaits me at present, from the quiet succession of peaceful hours, that are invariably passed at Belmont Castle. Certainly, to a steady thinking mind the country must claim the preference; but youth naturally paints those scenes with which it is least acquainted in the gayest colours; and I am convinced of the truth of what you have

have often told me, that is necessary to know the world, properly to condemn its vanities.

Was I alone, and should not thereby lose the company of Miss Clifton, I would write to Miss Mostyn, and likewise answer Emma Horton's kind epistle, in which I suppose, she for the last time, signed that name; but I hope I shall not lose in Mrs. Melmoth, the friend I so much valued in Emma Horton.

Adieu, dear madam; from all accounts I shall not have so much time to dedicate to this employment as I wish; but believe me, that though I may through hurry and dissipation fail in the proper use of my pen, I never shall, in that duty and affection, which gratitude for your maternal kindness will ever support and increase in the breast of your

LOUISA STAFFORD.

LETTER

LETTER LII.

MISS FANNY CLIFTON TO MISS PARKER.

DISSIPATION and hurry so enslave every moment of my time, that till this day, I have not had one atom to bestow upon my friend; not being able to trespass even upon my pillow, for continual raking at night has at length made me idle in a morning. 'Tis astonishing! with what avidity thousands pursue night after night, the same amusements, without the smallest variation, and still seem as much delighted, as if insinuating novelty still gilded the scene.

Think not that I am growing prudish and cynical, or pretending to ape those belles of fashion, who affect to despise pleasures, of which they are continually partaking. I would not have you think that my ears are become, through a modish refinement, incapable of being regaled at an opera; that I can find no delight in a ball; or that even
a card

a card party (though I engage not in any game) has not power to afford me satisfaction; I like them all in moderation, but the continual and uninterrupted repetition of them, pall and fatigue the mind.

I have stolen this evening to devote to this employment, which, however frequently repeated, would never want the charm of novelty.

I have, during the last week, enjoyed the company of my much esteemed friend Lady Louisa Stafford; she met with a most frightful accident upon her journey hither, and had not a worthy knight-errant appeared in a lucky moment, I might have lost a treasure in my amiable friend; she happily escaped unhurt; but less fortunate was the generous Fitzhenry, whose heart I greatly fear fell a sacrifice to his humanity: I fear it, because it is a passion which neither is, or likely to become mutual; otherwise I see no obstacle, except the paltry articles of wealth and rank, in which there is certainly a great inequality, but which I am cer-

certain, though they are advantages so highly esteemed in the world, will never influence the heart of Lady Louisa Stafford.—You, perhaps, as well as myself, may have lived in Devonshire unacquainted with the character, and even the name of Mr. Fitzhenry, though the world rings with his applause, as an exemplary son, an affectionate brother, a steady friend, and a benefactor to the indigent; endowed with such virtues, one cannot doubt but the tender husband would compleat the rest—in my opinion there is a great familiarity between the person and address of this gentleman, and your admired Beville; to be sure he cannot boast of so fine a face, as indeed few can, but his countenance beams with understanding and sensibility.

His civility obtained him a permission to visit Lady Louisa, and he has so stolen into the favour of Lady Wilson, that he is never absent from a want of invitation; we therefore enjoy much of his company, he makes one in all our parties, and is Lady Louisa's constant and most attentive cicisbeo, notwithstanding

standing the almost irresistible *agreements* of the charming relict, Mrs. Crofts, who, (or never more attribute to me the gift of penetration) is willing to become a candidate for the affection of the young heir. Her allurements, however, though she is young and beautiful, will in this case prove ineffectual:—whilst our fair friend, unconscious, and regardless of her power, has already made a conquest of that prize she is so assiduous to obtain. Trifles are ever either the springs which actuate the more material incidents of life, or the mirrors by which they are reflected; and it is from them I form my conjectures.

Last Saturday we were at the opera; our party consisted of Lady Louisa, Lady Wilson, Mrs. Crofts, Lord Fitzroy, Captain Droitville, and myself—Mr. Fitzhenry was upon the list, but a slight indisposition deprived us of our premier beau. Mrs. Crofts came late, the moment she entered, her eyes wandered round the room in quest of her favourite, and those intelligent orbs candidly acknowledged the concern she felt at his absence:

absence:—her chagrin was too violent for restraint, and displayed itself in her salutations to the whole company, particularly to poor Droitville, who is one of the worthiest beings that exists; she returned his address with such a slight inclination of the head, and such an air of contempt and ill-nature, that I feared the sensibility of the honest soldier would be wounded.—This extraordinary conduct was more observable in the pretty widow than it would have been in another person, as she is geneeally good humoured and lively—A thundering rap, at last revived her spirits, but it was only a prelude to a further mortification.—When the fluttering Lord Fitzroy appeared, her spleen was ungovernable—“ Bless me! is it you my lord—I protest you are a perfect Mercury; you fly from one end of the town to another like a rocket; wherever I go I have the honour of a rencontre with your lordship.”

The peevish air with which these words were accompanied, gave them a signification, which, with a different mode

mode of expression, might not have been attributed to them.

“ ’Pon honour, my dearest widow, said
 “ his lordship, you are extremely cruel—
 “ May I never more be honoured with
 “ your smiles if I ever received so petri-
 “ fying a compliment: the ladies have
 “ favoured me, with remarking my ab-
 “ sence, but crush me to an atom, if I could
 “ exist under an idea that the frequency
 “ of my appearance gave them *ennui*.”

“ Bless me !” exclaimed I, “ How
 “ can a person of your lordship’s wit
 “ and observation so egregiously mis-
 “ take Mrs. Crofts’ self congratulations
 “ upon the good fortune that attends
 “ her.”

This compliment purchased a languishing bow, with his *chapeau bras* pressed to his breast, and his eyes cast upon the ground. You must know, his bow is absolutely proverbial; there is not a *Marmoset* in town but what is taught to make an obeisance like the divine Fitzroy.

I soon repented of my flattery, it cost me too dear, for it brought upon me
 the

the persecution of his constant company:—he never quitted my elbow, though he frequently gave hints of the sacrifices he made, observing, that the Duchefs of H—, the Marchionefs of —, &c. must wonder at his abfenting himfelf fo long from them : I repeatedly remonftrated againft fuch an unfair monopoly, but all in vain, I had gratified his vanity, and muft receive the invaluable recompence.

During our tea, Lady Louifa faid,
“ Upon my word, I am vailly concern-
“ ed to hear of Mr. Fitzhenry’s illnefs.”
—“ Illnefs!” repeated Mrs. Crofts eagerly—“ The widow’s penchant begins to
“ difplay itfelf”—whifpered my right honourable torment at the back of my chair—“ Pray have you heard any thing
“ of a Captain Droitville” continued her ladyfhip?—“ Yes Madam,” replied he—“ I fat an hour with him this morn-
“ ing, and the moft difagreeable part of his
“ complaint feems to be his concern, at
“ not being able to fulfil his engage-
“ ment and attend this party to the
“ opera—his diforder is a cold, with a
“ cough

“cough and hoarseness, which I hope
“will soon be removed,—but is not at
“all calculated for a companion to a
“musical entertainment.”

Lord Fitzroy continued his remarks upon the widow—saying—“upon my
“soul, it is inconceivable, that a woman
“who has lived so long in the *beau*
“*monde*, can regard the rustic appear-
“ance of Fitzhenry, but her day is
“nearly over, and she must not expect
“those devoirs which are due to more
“radiant charms.”—I put an end to this impertinence, by answering aloud (though I knew the lady could not hear me, as she was engaged at the other end of the room) truly Mrs. Crofts and Mr. Fitzhenry are much obliged to your lordship—it is a pity they are not sensible of their obligations, suppose I inform them.—
“For heaven’s sake have mercy!” cried the fribble—“Strike me speechless if I
“could survive such an exposure.”—
The coaches being at the door, ended our controversy, and we drove to the Hay-market. I adore an opera: ’tis my most favourite entertainment excepting a play, which is a predilection I must
whisper,

whisper, for in this age of refinement, which prefers dissipation to pleasure, crowds to society, and noise to sentiment, it is a vulgarism not to be acknowledged. I was obliged, however, that night, to acknowledge my *quondam* friend Captain Plume:—not a very creditable acquaintance, though his hair was dressed *au dernier goût*, and his little wit extended to render him compleatly ridiculous. His joy was inexpressible at our rencontre, and I will venture to affirm, that his happiness was supreme, when I introduced him at his own request to Lord Fitzroy; for he is never so happy as when he can attach himself to a remnant of quality. I did not mention him to Lady Wilson, but told him, when he desired leave to visit me, that I was with a friend, whose company must be mine, nor could I make any addition to it with propriety. You are sensible how much he can presume upon the slightest civilities, and people of so forward a disposition, ought ever to be kept at a distance.

The other night, we were at a ball at Lady Finchley's—upon entering the
I room,

room, I was accosted by Lord Fitzroy—
“ Miss Clifton,” said he, “ here is a
“ friend of mine who has long languish-
“ ed to be introduced to you:—give
“ me leave to embrace this opportunity
“ of fulfilling my promise”—he then
quitted me, as I supposed, to seek the
stranger.—At that moment Lady Louisa,
who had been talking to Miss Finchley,
seized hold of my arm, and eagerly
cried, “ bless me Fanny, do you see
“ that monster”—“ monster” child, re-
peated I, “ you surely do not give so
“ frightful an appellation to a beau”—
“ Yes I do,” she replied, “ and think
“ him the worst of brutes that deserves
“ the denomination; and I suppose you
“ will agree with me, when I inform
“ you it is that despicable wretch Hor-
“ ton.” She had no sooner said so, than
we saw him approach with Lord Fitzroy.
They had not advanced many paces
before the former started, turned on
his heel, and retreated, drawing with
him his companion, who looked all
amazement. For my part, I thought
we had lost this noble pair for the even-
ing,

ing, and fancied I should be a partner out of pocket, as I was engaged to Fitzroy. I soon found I was mistaken, for when the company separated, the elder part to cards, the younger to dance, and whilst the one took out your humble servant, the other led Miss Carlisle into the ball-room.

A conviction of grace upon a callous mind, is like a flash of lightning, which gives a momentary electrical shock, but meeting with a powerful repeller, makes no farther impression.

This brilliant assembly ended without any particular anecdote; but upon our return home, as I was jumping into the coach, handed by my partner, the horses being eager to be gone, suddenly moved it as my foot was upon the step, and down I slipped into a very dangerous situation, just under the wheel, which the friendly Droitville perceiving, as he followed with Lady Wilson, he sprung forward, and regardless of the welfare of the nation, through the little peer on one side, (who narrowly escaped being in a worse plight than myself) helped

me up with the most trembling concern, and placed me in the coach covered with snow; he seated himself by my side, and the dear soul seemed much more agitated by this *bagatelle* than myself—I wish I could love him—yes, strange as you may think the declaration, I repeat that I wish I could love him: for my vanity informs me, that I could conquer his heart, was I to make a regular attack.

I am no advocate for matrimony in order to settle, but as the little tyrant love has invaded my heart, I wish I could so prudently change the object; such an exchange would not bestow upon me superfluous affluence and splendour, but it would secure to me a worthy sensible friend, and a life of tranquillity and ease, with a comfortable competency; but my heart is a retrograde, a rebellious subject, which scorns the sway of my better judgement.

I am angry at you Maria: notwithstanding my displeasure has lain dormant, infer not from thence that it has expired—No! no! it exists in its full
vigour

vigour with ample support—I can even quote your own words against yourself—the very text of your last epistle teacheth, that the embers of an hopeless passion ought not to be kept alive, but extinguished with all possible perspicuity: yet are you encouraging the unavailing flame of your Beville, like a foolish fond mamma, who will give the child what it cries for, though its life may become the sacrifice.

We all enjoy conquest, and delight in power; but such a man as Beville, ought not to be trifled with; a little coquetry, with those insensible butterflies who affect a passion they can never feel, is pardonable, and can produce no other effect, than by flattering their self-love, which is their ruling principle, and exposing their folly in a more contemptible light.

The coach stops with the two ladies, and I dare say, Mr. Fitzhenry, who is Lady Louisa's shadow, whilst she likes his company, and is totally unconscious of the victory of her charms.

If all his assiduities are ineffectual, I shall greatly pity him; for that civility
which

which is the effect of gratitude, and her natural good humour, must be very flattering to a lover. I dare not give her a hint of this nature, as her excessive delicacy would make her instantly alter a behaviour, which from time and security may possibly grow into love. Good night, remember me to the Bevilles, &c. &c.

FANNY CLIFTON.

I wrote to my aunt three posts ago, and have received no answer; be so good as to call upon her when you have an opportunity, and urge her to write: I am sure you would be kind enough to become her amanuensis if she should wish it. I am uneasy on account of her health, though I know it is naturally good, as she is continually taking quack medicines, against which no constitution is proof.

L E T.

LETTER LIII.

LORD DAVENANT TO MR. FITZHENRY.

“*EXPERIENTIA docet*”—shake hands my friend, 'tis a maxim equally applicable to us both, and from henceforth shall be my motto.—Experience has taught me with a rod of iron, that a sensual passion, in which the mind is not engaged, deserves not the name of love: it has also instructed you with twigs that make you smart, but break no bones, that love is a deity that will be worshipped, and suffers not a slight with impunity. I rejoice in your timely conviction—believe me you are happily delivered from a life of joyless apathy and discontent.

Your fair conqueror must have spent the life of a recluse: till the moment I saw her in the house of my lovely Fanny, where she kindly consented to become a mediatrix on my part, I knew not that Lady Belmont had a daughter: her Lord continues here as gay and dissipated as

ever, with that toad Claremont, who, whilst he thinks himself blest in her constancy, bestows her favours promiscuously; she made advances even to me, though I incurred her displeasure upon my first arrival; for without dreaming that she had the audacity to usurp the title of Lady Belmont, I addressed her in public by the name of Claremont: indeed, I cannot yet conform so much to their vices, as to give her any other appellation, therefore I have hitherto avoided any. Lord Belmont has made many overtures towards an intimacy, but from me, he will never receive more than a cold civility—I cannot shake hands with, and smile in the face of the man I despise. Though I have been a libertine myself, it is a character I now detest: and the married libertine was ever the object of my abhorrence.

It appears wonderful to me, that whilst this man's villany is so well known, and so much exclaimed against in England, he is here universally caressed, and that, even by his own countrymen.

My

My mind is in a state little more enviable than when I wrote last, with this difference, that it was then all tumult and despair; which has now given place to a settled melancholly, a change which can only be judged preferable by those who have not felt both.

The other night, at Madame d'Arcourt's assembly, I was most unmercifully rallied upon the gravity of my appearance.—One demanded where my *gaité de coeur* was *perdue*. Another, *quelle belle Angloise* had stolen my heart, and cruelly returned me a countenance *si triste*: when that little pert *Diabla Nunnette de Laroché*, whom we used to call *la belle brunette*, and who is now married to a French officer of the name of Granoux:—cried—“ I pretend not *au necromancie*, yet I can foresee that the return
“ *d'une jolie Francoise*, may suffice to restore
“ *la gaieté de mi lord*”—To be sure continued she, “ the Marquis de Chamont's
“ absence is provokingly *mal apropos* at
“ this juncture, and sufficient to destroy
“ the *vivacité* of the most lively Englishman. Absolutely my lord, you

“are monstrously cruel and uncivil to
“us all: are there no charms in the whole
“*Ville de Paris*, capable of rivalling the
“Marchioness, who I dare swear is wise
“enough to console herself with her
“present enamourments, without sacrific-
“ing one sigh to the poor absentee.
“Happily this is not the country of
“despondency, or I know not what
“might be the consequence of your
“cruelty.”

“Confound your impertinence” was the civilest reply I could have made; I therefore contented myself with a silent look of contempt, in which I fully expressed my chagrin, and thereby furnished them with fresh arms against myself, and let loose an hundred tongues at once; from which I made my escape by a precipitate retreat.

Since this attack I have endeavoured to assume an air of ease very foreign to my feelings, and which is more painful than indulging my distress, and which makes it return upon me with accumulated vigour.

I can

I can no longer restrain my pen, it will stray to the forbidden subject. Tell me if you have heard of Miss Clifton—tell me, if it is yet a crime to love her—yet tell me not that she is married—such a sentence would overturn my reason—there is distraction in the thought.

Adieu, I am ever your's,

DAVENANT.

LETTER LIV.

MR. FITZHENRY TO LORD DAVENANT.

YOUR lordship's letter is just arrived, and now before me, but my animadversions thereon must be postponed to a future opportunity.

I waited without delay upon Sir Clement, who, though at breakfast when I called, which was about one, honoured me with a private audience: fashion seems totally to have annihilated every other idea: he is so absorbed in polite indolence, that it is a fatigue even to quit his seat. He received the recantation of my proposals, with all the *sang-*

froid of good breeding; begged leave to introduce me to his wife and daughter, though not according to his wishes as his future son, yet as an agreeable addition to the circle of their acquaintance. —This was a favour I declined, as it was a ceremony, which in my situation, required more assurance than I possessed: he then gave me an invitation to a rout in the evening, which I accepted; and there I had the supreme felicity of meeting the idol of my soul: the angelic Lady Louisa, and likewise had an excellent opportunity of contemplating the precipice, from which my good stars had preserved me, in all its terrors. Light and darkness cannot be more opposite, than the characters of Lady Louisa Stafford and Miss Carlisle—the one all nature—the other all art—the one all gentleness, good humour and sensibility—the other all vanity, affectation, and folly—the one tall and graceful, fair as a lilly, with the bloom of health sparkling in her countenance—the other an ill-formed enamelled puppet. To what a blessed state I had exposed myself:

myself: when I attempt to look back, I shrink with horror from the retrospection.

Her ladyship acknowledged me with the ease and freedom of an old acquaintance, and introduced me to your friend, Lady Wilson, with whom at present she resides. She also presented me to a young lady, who notwithstanding my passion for another, I freely confess is the most complete beauty I ever beheld. She most gracefully received my address, and paid me a genteel compliment on the services I had the good fortune to render her friend. Start not! when I inform you that this paragon of beauty, is equal in every mental and personal charm to your adored Miss Clifton;—Rave as you will,—storm as you please,—I will undertake to maintain my opinion against every argument you can urge against me, and even to force your lordship to agree in my sentiment. But it would be a cruelty to keep you longer in suspense; to withhold from you the pleasure of knowing that I enjoy daily, and even hourly, the conver-

sation of your identical Fanny, and that it is her own numberless perfections that can alone rival each other.

If envy is destructive of friendship, heaven shield me from the loss of your's! for I know not how I could brook even its diminution—Envy as you will, I know you dar'n't quarrel with me—One snarl, and I will not suffer my pen even to mark the initials of the magical name of Fanny Clifton.

I have more raptures in store for you, and as I may now hope the last is nearly exhausted, I will no longer delay informing you, that your little angel is not more likely to become Lady Beville, than Lady Davenant: nor do I think she will soon enter into the honourable state of matrimony. At present, her heart seems perfectly at rest, and light and free as the element she breathes, although it is closely besieged by the youngest Barton, who has succeeded by the death of his brother to the family title and estate, and to every folly of the age. I wonder a woman of Miss Clifton's superior understanding, will suf-

fer a fellow whom she evidently despises, constantly to attend her. A little love of coquetry is her only foible, and she is led into it by the vivacity of her disposition; yet does she never indulge it at the expence of a man of real merit; and whilst it is confined to such asses as Fitzroy, though it may not be commendable, it cannot be deemed altogether inexcusable. I am convinced his real views are not towards matrimony: his disposition is too sordid to barter the charms of gold for any other; it is vanity that attaches him to Miss Clifton; she is at present the reigning beauty, and it is necessary to *die* at her feet, to be fit to *live* in the precincts of St. James's; he therefore plumes himself upon being the first in her train. There is a worthy officer frequently at Lady Wilson's, whose name is Droitville: he seems to feel the effect of her charms in the very inmost recesses of his heart. To him she behaves with the utmost civility and friendly respect, and was I one of these candidates to obtain the prize, I would take his five hundred pounds a year and
half

half pay, against Fitzroy's cornet and rupees.

I am at present in elysium; I have an unlimited licence to visit at Lady Wilton's—how long this beam of bliss will last, heaven knows.—I am sensible how fast these indulgencies are undermining my future peace, yet I want resolution to rouse myself from the sweet delusion.

Your's,

E. FITZHENRY.

LETTER LV.

MISS CLIFTON TO MISS PARKER.

I HAVE not time to write long epistles, therefore shall scribble a line when I can, journalwise as you say.

I spent yester evening, or more properly speaking, last night, most delightfully at the pantheon:—If I was a man, I should ramble about on purpose to hunt after characters, as it is, I must be contented when kind chance drops them in my way. I need not describe to you the beauty of
this

this temple of terrestrial deities, as you have seen it, but shall proceed to the picture of my partner, who was an Irishman, introduced to me by Lady Wilson, who is well acquainted with his family.

“ Arrah be my soul,” said he, “ you’re
“ the prettiest little girl I have seen o’
“ this side the water, and burn me, if
“ there is any thing under the sun that
“ I wish so much as to make you Mrs.
“ O’Hara—Come, come, take me at my
“ word :—accept the hand and heart of
“ an honest Irishman :—you may live to
“ have a worse offer—for let me tell
“ you, little O’Hara isn’t every body’s
“ money ; he can shew some hundred acres
“ of as good *terra firma*, as any feather-
“ headed puppy in the three kingdoms.”

How do you like my Hibernian?—
for my part I am over head and ears in
love with him—if I was sure that he
would always be so entertaining as he
was last night, I think I should be
tempted to follow his advice, and quit
the river Thames for the banks of the
Liffy—but I fear when his brogue lost
its

its novelty, and his elegant phrases became familiar to my ear, all his charms would be reduced to his boasted *terra firma*.

I must lay down my pen at present, as I am called to breakfast.

TWO O'CLOCK.

The two ladies are gone to an exhibition, and I would have gone also, but for that torment Fitzroy. As to myself, I should only laugh at him; he is just the sort of man to trifle with, without endangering his peace of mind, or one's own; but the town begins to be impatient, and has set it down in the book of certainties, that I must become Lady Fitzroy.

I detest all busy talkers: how they break in upon one's amusements—even their ladyships are infected—at breakfast—said Lady Wilson, with a gravity suited to the question—“pray, Miss Clifton, what do you intend to do with Lord Fitzroy”—“do with him,” repeated I—“why! to be sure, as I have always done—laugh at him.”—“Well! my dear (you will excuse my
“speaking)

“ speaking) I think you should take
“ care, whilst you laugh at him, that
“ that the world does not sneer at you.”

“ Oh, as to that, the world will
“ sneer, whether I laugh or cry, I might
“ torture my muscles in vain, before I
“ could work such a miracle.”

“ Indeed, my dear,” said her lady-
ship’s auxilliary, Lady Louisa—“ you
“ should consider a little”—“ Consider,
“ my love,” repeated I—“ what must
“ I consider? I have told Lord Fitzroy
“ my sentiments sincerely, and if he
“ will not believe me, does he not de-
“ serve to be persecuted a little for his
“ incredulity? besides—what must I do?
“ I cannot avoid his company without
“ banishing either myself or him from
“ society: the first would be too great
“ a sacrifice, and the other too diffi-
“ cult a task to perform.”—Well, my
“ dear,” said Lady Wilson, “ I see you
“ will not be advised, therefore you
“ must do as you please”—I began
to feel greatly hurt at the serious
manner in which she treated a subject
which I regarded so lightly, though my
pride

pride would not suffer me to acknowledge it—I affected a careless air, and cried, “ your ladyship shall not so far wrong me; to prove that I am open to conviction, I must beg leave to decline the honour of accompanying you to the exhibition this morning. It is a divine lounge certainly; but I am willing to sacrifice all the pleasure I should receive from it, to avoid a rencontre with Lord Fitzroy, who is sure to be there.”—“ Nay, Fanny, that would be absolutely ridiculous”—exclaimed both at once.

“ What can I do then?” demanded I—“ It is certainly better than going to pout and look sullen—you should consider that I am upon my preference—and a forbidding, contemptuous air might lose me more flirts than his lordship.”—Thus I supported my argument, and here I am *in statu quo*.

How admirably could I have retorted upon Lady Louisa if I durst.—What a sermon I could preach on the cruelty of wounding a man of sentiment, whilst I think I could deduce from arguments
innumerable,

innumerable, sufficient proof that there is no crime in killing a butterfly.

I must leave you again to dress: we dine early to-day, as we always do when we go to the play—I am determined this little sprig of fashion, shall not deprive me of the pleasure of seeing my dear Mrs. Abington in the character of Lady Teazle—No! I think I'll give my vanity the reins—bid defiance to the whole race of busy bodies; call the men's malice jealousy, and the women's envy—a most agreeable way of settling the matter at once.

Compare the date of this with my last, and give me the credit due for so much paper spoilt in the midst of this quick succession of dress and engagements.

I shall expect a letter from you in a day or two; you are as regular as clock work, whilst I am ever changing, and of course ever new.—How I should exult in my superiority, if I was not conscious that there is no room for you to change for the better. Your's,

FANNY CLIFTON.

L E T-

LETTER LVI.

MISS PARKER TO MISS CLIFTON.

ABSOLUTELY, my dear friend, you are more a mad cap than ever.—London, and its charms do intoxicate you indeed.—We must have you in E—— again, and endeavour to soberize you a little—seriously, my dear, you are indeed to blame—one moment's calm reflection would convince you of your error.—Let me conjure you to attend to your friends admonitions!—men of Lord Fitzroy's character are seldom troubled with very refined sentiments, and should he basely support the malice of the world, by boasting of greater encouragement than he has ever received, how could you defend yourself from his calumny, whilst you have imprudently suffered outward appearances to give such a false colour to his assertions. Believe me, my dear, it is not sufficient that our consciences approve our actions,
it

it is also necessary that we pay some regard to the opinion of others.

Excuse me for offering my advice, to one whose judgment is so far superior to my own, I only wish to awaken your caution: you should consider, that the constant attendance of a lover supposed to be favoured, is the most certain repeller of all other advances, which is a circumstance that merits your attention, as there is men in the world, to whom Miss Clifton might aspire, who, with Lord Fitzroy's rank and wealth, possess understanding and worth, and to whom she could form no objection.

I had last night the honour of dancing with Mr. Beville, at the first assembly I have attended since you left us, where he presented me with your picture. It was a miniature of you, to be sure, and somewhat like you; though but a base copy of the original: when I received it, my looks expressed my astonishment; indeed, I did not only feel surprised, but offended at the little deception he had endeavoured to impose upon me. He perceived my chagrin, and cried—

cried—"I see Miss Parker you have
" discovered my treachery—but a dis-
" honesty in love is pardonable."—
" Then," returned I, " it is a passion un-
" worthy of Miss Clifton, whose cha-
" racteristics are candour and sincerity—
" indeed, Mr. Beville, you ought not
" to have served me thus—you are draw-
" ing upon me the displeasure of my
" best friend, who has already blamed
" me for my acquiescence with your re-
" quest; she wishes you to forget her,
" and accuses me of keeping alive a
" passion, which by this time she hoped
" was extinct."

" Can you be so cruel?" exclaimed
he, " is she not content with depriving
" me of herself?—Must she even grudge
" me the poor enjoyment of gazing upon
" her inanimate representation? Can she
" so cruelly delight in giving pain."

" Oh no, it is not in her nature; you
" have not a sincerer friend than Miss
" Clifton: believe me, your happiness
" is as dear to her as her own; yet highly
" as she values your friendship, she is
" ready to sacrifice it to your peace of
" mind,

“ mind, and I am under the disagree-
“ able necessity of requesting in her
“ name, that you will perform your
“ promise, by returning the miniature
“ I lent you.”

“ Well Miss Parker, since it must be
“ so,” replied he with a profound
sigh—“ since I must be wretched—the
“ sooner I learn to submit to my fate
“ the better. I will resign them both,
“ and acknowledge your better judge-
“ ment. All I ask in lieu of the gra-
“ tification of which you have deprived
“ me is, that you will sometimes indulge
“ me with half an hour’s conversation
“ on the subject next my heart.”—Could
you have supposed that he would have
descended from the subject next his
heart, to the most florid compliments
upon the insignificant and uninteresting
article dress; there must certainly be an
instinctive quality in love, which disco-
vered to him the elegant taste of Miss
Clifton, in the habiliments of her friend.

Your choice has been favoured with
the general approbation of your native
place: the beauty and gentility of the
dress,

dress, makes me fear you did not consider the narrow finances of your Maria in the purchase of it: pray let me know in what degree it encreases my boundless debts to you, as it is almost the only one I have any change of defraying. I am, and ever shall remain your devoted friend,

MARIA PARKER.

LETTER LVII.

LORD DAVENANT, TO MR. FITZHENRY,

Spa.

YES, you may look again: but you'll find it is absolutely Spa from whence this is dated.

Supping one night with the Chevalier Villiard, I was a little less than planet struck, by his informing me, that he expected the arrival of the Marquis and Marchioness in three days; adding, that they would be most agreeably surprized to find their old friend in Paris.

Notwithstanding the almost electrical shock that this intelligence had given me, I had the presence of mind to lament

ment my ill fortune, which would force me from Paris at the very moment of their return. I then informed them, that I had received a letter that morning, which contained the afflicting news of a particular friend being at the point of death at Spa. I drew a pathetic picture of his situation, painted his regard for your humble servant in the most affecting colours, with his dying request to see me once more, in order to induce me to undertake the management of his affairs after his decease, adding, that attention to the bed of sickness, was a duty to which every other should be subservient.

In short, I told a pack of confounded lies, with a better grace than I ever told one in my life. I must hope the motive will plead my excuse: though it is but a scurvy business that compels a man to commit one fault, in order to avoid another. The De Villiards treated me with the utmost kindness, and I really believe, were sincerely concerned at my departure.

Returning late to my lodgings, and crossing the corner of a street, I heard the report of a pistol, and the clashing of swords; I immediately pulled the string, leaped out of the chariot, and drawing my sword, pursued the sound, which soon brought me to the assistance of an elderly gentleman, whose strength seemed nearly exhausted in defending himself against two disguised ruffians. Fortune so happily supported the zeal which his situation had excited, that I put the braves to flight without receiving a single scratch: less fortunate was my poor ally, whose shoulder was grazed by a bullet from that pistol which had alarmed me; besides a dangerous wound he had received in the side: his great loss of blood had by this time totally deprived him of strength to support himself, and I should have been greatly distressed, had not my honest Swiss at that moment appeared in search of me, with whose help I conveyed him to the carriage, and drove to his lodging, to which he was with difficulty capable of directing me: in my way thither,
the

the bleeding of his wound alarmed me, and I repented that I had not sent for a surgeon, without removing him from the place where I had found him, as all my assiduities to prevent the blood issuing in streams from his side, were ineffectual. Fortunately we did not arrive many minutes before Du Fal, for whom I had dispatched one of my men immediately : he disregarded his loss of blood, which had so much terrified me, or rather seemed to think it a happy circumstance, as he had reason to apprehend a fever would ensue, owing to the gross habit of his patient, who appeared to have been a fine hale old Englishman; who from his servant's account, would crack his bottle and jest with any man; chuckle over the stories of his youth, and relate the numerous vicissitudes of fortune which he had weathered through, (to use an expression of his own) with the glee of five and twenty. His generosity was demonstrated by the interest he had gained in the hearts of his domestics, who were all inconsolable at this tragical event, which threatened

them with the loss of their beloved master. From their information, I found he had supped at the Hotel de —, a noted receptacle for sharpers, of which, he being a stranger in Paris, was most probably ignorant.

Whilst his wounds were dressing, I went, notwithstanding the hour, to the *Lieutenant de Police*, where I lodged an information, as far in my power, of what had passed—but through the hurry of my spirits, I had entirely forgot to enquire the name of the assaulted, though I had made myself in part acquainted with his history: I was therefore obliged to return for the necessary intelligence, and conceive my astonishment, when I was informed that his name was Clifton: I have ever since been torturing my memory to recollect, whether it is possible he can be related to the angelic Fanny; but am convinced he is not, unless very distantly, as had he been of that family, I must have heard of him: his servants know not a relation he has; for although they are all English, they were hired
abroad,

abroad, where I imagine his riches have been accumulated.

After giving the *Lieutenant de Police* the best instructions I could, with directions to find me at Spa, in case my appearance should be necessary for the conviction of the assassins, and exhorted him to be diligent in the pursuit of them, I again visited Mr. Clifton, and flattered myself I should again find Du Fal's hopes strengthened since the dressing of the wounds, instead of which, to my infinite concern, I found all his fears verified, his patient being then in a high fever: he had very prudently called in the assistance of a physician, who would not suffer any one, except the nurse, to remain in the room with him; I therefore returned to my own lodgings, where my servants were preparing for my removal. I threw myself upon the bed, got about an hour's rest, and then wrote a note to the Chevalier de Villiard, entreating him to indulge me with his company for a few minutes before he left Paris: he kindly attended my summons, and promised to pay every

E 3 attention

attention to the wounded stranger, to whose lodgings I took him, and from thence began my journey hither, where I found the tale I had forged almost realized by the illness of poor Gresham, who is hourly expected to fall a martyr to debauchery.

I fear your letter will be retarded by this sudden change of place. I long to hear of your *dulcinea*.—May your love be mutual.

Talk of any thing but the devil they say, and it is sure to appear, and *apropo*, to establish the fame of the old saw, a letter with your signature presents itself.

Bravo!—bravissimo!—This is as it should be! in the same house with my Fanny!—that a man so encompassed with despair as I am, can feel a momentary sensation so nearly allied to transport!—Now I can talk to her! hear her sweet voice, and gaze on her! by proxy!—but mind, I will not *love* her by proxy.—If you say a civiller thing to her than you would to your grandmother, by my soul I shall pistolize you.

Of

—Of what complexion is your Lady Louisa—I was too much engrossed with the idea of another object, when I saw her, to remark it—she must be a bright star, who can be seen so near the sun!

I wish I was in London, and durst kick that dog Fitzroy into the Thames; not that I fear he will gain the affections of Miss Clifton, for they will never capitulate to a fool; but he is of a society of which Horton is president, who shrinks at nothing villanous; and though not possessed himself of a head to form any plans, he has a heart to follow, and execute the diabolical schemes of his compeers.

For heaven's sake have a watchful eye upon him.

I thank my stars that Miss Clifton is so courted and carested, nothing will keep her disengaged so effectually as universal admiration:—all must be safe.

“Where wigs, with wigs, with sword knots, sword

“knots strive,

“Beaux banish beaux, and coaches, coaches

“drive.”

This adulation, I trust, will secure her heart, even from the all potent Droitville; but in what therein shall I be gratified? Whoever loses it, it is certain I shall never gain it; nor after what is past, can I ever make the attempt.— Yet should I feel a kind of puffinious satisfaction;—a sort of negative comfort, in finding that no one could obtain that treasure, which it is not my fate to possess.

This I confess, is acknowledging a degree of selfishness, which perhaps may not admit of excuse, and is probably entirely undefineable to you men of *refined* sentiments, who can contrive to love under the proper restrictions of reason, and prudence, which is a perfection I have not yet attained: though after having been so severely lashed with the rod of affliction, brought upon me by my own vices, I trust I shall henceforth keep my actions within the pale, not of honour, but honesty: the first word has been too much prostituted to be worthy the use of an honest man.

It is time to bid you adieu; I am
growing

growing grave, and dull of course.—
Write soon, for every letter from you will
now be worth a million.

DAVENANT:

LETTER LIX.

MISS CLIFTON TO MISS PARKER.

I PROTEST Maria, you are ten times worse than any of them! your letter cost me a whole alternoon's head-ach! and that so *mal-a-propos*—just when I was going to the opera, and ought to have expired at the enchanting voice of that syren Signora Sestini.

Thank heaven the town begins to cast a buz at the tender glances of Fitzhenry towards her ladyship, which will set my tongue at liberty, and I can play one Fitz against another admirably. As to the little right honourable, I should not care if he was tost in a blanket, or sent over to France to bring home fashions, or upon any other embassy worthy the depth of his understanding. What can I do? I cannot forbid him Lady Wil-

son's house—I cannot prevent his talking to me, and when he does talk, common civility obliges me to reply.

You will scarcely believe, after what was said the morning I wrote last, that Lord Fitzroy was brought home to dinner: before his arrival, I declare I was bent upon exerting my utmost assiduities to avoid him; but upon finding my schemes so immediately counteracted, I was determined to give myself no further trouble but submit wholly to chance. I see Lady Wilson's aim; she does not wish me to quarrel with, but to marry him: you are already acquainted with her foible, which makes her regard the grandeur of such an alliance as perfectly invincible.

I admire the last caution you gave me concerning him. Alas Maria! you are little acquainted with my feelings! believe me, I shall never be any other than your friend Fanny Clifton:—fluttering and gay as I appear, I have my moments of anguish! but I'll say no more.

I am glad you have got the picture from Beville: there is fascination in a picture

picture ! I speak from experience—Soon after I became acquainted with Lord Davenant, I discovered my talent for taking likenesses from memory, and his face being undeniably the handsomest I knew, I naturally made choice of it for the first trial of my genius:—and this foolish bit of paint, taken without thought, or the least apparent probability of any ill consequences ensuing, is now become my torment: it is not in my power to let it remain in my drawer; I must have it continually about me, nor can I refrain one moment when I am alone from poring over it—I have formed numberless resolutions to burn it, without being able to execute my purpose.

I am glad you like your dress.—Talk not of your debts to me—Is it not you, whom next to Heaven I may thank for my present existence? If you will not accept of so trifling a mark of my regard, I shall deem your friendship greatly inferior to that of your

F. CLIFTON.

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LETTER

LETTER LX.

MR. FITZHENRY TO LORD DAVENANT.

I RECEIVED your letter yesterday, and think I have some merit in answering it so soon, considering how happily my time at present is engaged.

Fear not my flirting with Miss Clifton; there is a star even so near the sun, whose radiance, or good or bad, will fix my destiny. Her ladyship evidently distinguishes me from the numerous pretenders that surround her: sharks all ready to make a prey of her wealth. I am obliged to restrain my attentions in some degree, through fear of tattlers: should a busy circulating whisper reach her ears, insinuating that my presumptuous heart aspires to more than friendship, I might instantly be divested of the flattering privileges I at present enjoy.

She now gives way to the happy complacency of her temper, and treats me with a civility in which is displayed every regard but love. Indeed her respectful

spectful behaviour almost frightens me: you once said love and respect were incompatible, and circumstances at that time corroborated your assertion. I know how much you have made the female heart your study: yet in one instance you have deceived yourself; and I will hope, that in the other you are no less fallible.

The other night I danced with your admired Fanny—I am *obliged* to ask her sometimes to save appearances.—She is the oddest girl! as we were following her friend to take our places in the dance, she twitched my arm, and cried, “hold
“ —I had forgot—we must not stand
“ too near her ladyship—that would be
“ spoiling your plan at once”—so away she tripped to the bottom of the room, and I was obliged to follow.—Lady Louisa danced with a young officer of the guards, a very handsome fellow, but cursedly conceited, and that little gipsy Fanny, was continually remarking the elegance of his person, his Grecian nose, the irresistible sensibility of his countenance; declaring she expected nothing less than an elopment.—In short the
little

little witch teased me so unmercifully, that I don't think I shall ever dance with her again, which will be no great mortification, as she never stirs without a train of *beaux*.

She refused Lord Fitzroy at your aunt's assembly, and the poor peer was chagrined *à la mort*—she now begins to keep him at a proper distance, of which he is sensible and greatly piqued.

There is a Mrs. Crofts, a pretty gay widow, almost always of Lady Wilson's party: she has a handsome jointure, though to outward appearances very inadequate to her expences: she lives in a splendid stile, and is admitted into the best company; yet there is something in her behaviour which is, to me, very disagreeable—a kind of levity very unlike innocent vivacity. There is a freedom in her manner to our sex, which in my opinion is truly disgusting, and I observe, that men who are best acquainted with her character, make use of expressions in her company, which they would scorn to repeat before a woman of any delicacy. She has thrown out such
lures

lures for me, as it would be impossible for the utmost modesty, or even simplicity to mistake. I behave towards her with the greatest circumspection, for I regard such a character in a very dangerous light, and my situation is at present uncommonly critical.

Don't you think such a woman as Mrs. Crofts, is a more dangerous companion for young people, than any dissipated young fellow in the kingdom? however, there is no fear of any ill consequence from the present intimacy, as Lady Louisa, and Miss Clifton, are blest with an ample security in the superiority of their understandings.

I congratulate you on your escape from the Marchioness. I received your letter at Lady Wilson's, and was not suffered to put it in my pocket unopened: I therefore just glanced it over, and could have blessed Fanny for the reformation she has wrought: I thought she looked more like an angel than ever, and I believe, had not my heart been pre-engaged, it would at that moment have fallen a sacrifice to her charms. I often think

think of what you said concerning the strict propriety she constantly retained in her behaviour, notwithstanding her *gaieté de coeur*: she still preserves it: prudence is ever at her elbow, though one would suppose her unacquainted with the name: she keeps up that proper degree of *retenue*, which force the men to respect as well as to admire her.

I hope by this time you have had a good account of our wounded countryman, and sincerely hope your humanity will meet with its reward in his recovery.

Poor Gresham! he has soon finished himself:—he was a rake almost in leading strings.

Write by the return of the packet: though now situated as I am, your letters have an intrinsic value, which will ever secure them a warm reception from your sincere friend,

FRANCIS FITZHENRY.

L E T.

LETTER LXI.

THE COUNTESS OF BELMONT TO LADY LOUISA.

MRS. MOYSTEN is arrived, and so much is her daughter beloved in this family; that their happiness seems to diffuse itself in a general joy, in which your disconsolate mother shares a heart-felt satisfaction.

By yesterday's post I received a polite letter from Lord Courtney, offering me his only child for a son-in-law.—His proposals are formed upon the most alluring plans; at least such they would be esteemed by the generality of the world; but with me, one ounce of merit in the young man, would out-weigh the whole. Of him I can form no judgment, as his person and character are equally unknown to me:—as to the latter, indeed, I imagine he can scarcely yet have formed any, as he must be quite a boy:—his family are distantly related to your father; and as my lord *wisely* observes, it would be ten thousand pities a fortune so noble as yours should

should fall into the possession of a stranger.

Lord Courtney always bore the character of a very weak, proud man; his wife, on the contrary, was a very sensible, worthy woman, and literally a crown and scepter to her husband, for by a little laudable artifice, such as constantly appealing to him in conversation, and other little innocent frauds, she made her own elegant sentiments frequently pass upon the world as merely copies of his.

I have now given you a sketch of the parentage of your enamorata; of his education and understanding you must form a judgment, and act as your reason and your heart may dictate. If he meets with your approbation, mine will joyfully accompany it; or if a worthy commoner with a tythe of the gifts of fortune he was born to possess, should be more successful in obtaining your affections, my consent will follow with equal alacrity.

Lord Courtney informs me that he wrote to your father without receiving

an

an answer—Alas ! poor deluded man !—
but I check my pen—Adieu my dear
girl.

C. BELMONT.

LETTER LXII.

LADY LOUISA STAFFORD, TO THE COUNTESS OF
BELMONT.

IN what, dear Madam !—where shall
I find expressions to testify my gra-
titude !—language is deplorably inade-
quate to a true representation of my feel-
ings on the perusal of your kind letter.
Had you commanded, or expressed a
desire that I should receive the addresses
of the Hon. Mr. Dalton, to what mis-
eries should I have been devoted, for if
I could even act contrary to your slightest
wish, how unworthy I should be of such
a parent.

It is about a week since he was intro-
duced to me by Lord Courtney, and I
am inclined to conjecture, was taken
from his studies at Oxford for that pur-
pose, which plainly illustrates the little
importance

importance of mutual approbation in these Smithfield negotiations; as the date of your letter, as well as that to my father, must have been considerably antecedent to his visit here.

I subscribe to your opinion, that the young man has not yet formed any character, with this addition of my own, that he never will: never have my eyes beheld such a gawkey, he is a lump of fat stupidity; yet his father says, Simon is a very good scholar, and one morning, to the great diversion of all present, he called upon him to shew his learning by repeating some lines from Horace; which he got through with the help of twirling his hat upon his thumb, pretty dexterously.

The old lord courts admirably for him, but I think he would sooner succeed in procuring himself an help-mate than his son; for if I must be promoted to the honour of being either Mr. Dalton's wife or his mamma, I protest the latter should be my choice without hesitation.

How sincerely do I rejoice in the felicity of my friend Kitty.—Dear Madam,
what

what a melancholy reflection it is, that you, who are perpetually distributing happiness around you, should be yourself exempted from the enjoyment of it; but your mind has arrived at a superiority to all sublunary evils, and is become a mirror of divine content.

I am called upon to attend my friends to Hyde Park: the moment I return I shall resume my pen.

The other night at Mrs. Richlieu's assembly, I danced with a young officer, whom, it is the fashion to call divinely handsome, and he, very good naturedly, seems perfectly to agree with the opinion of the world. He is the youngest son of the younger branch of the —— family, and lives in the first style of elegance, without any visible means of support, except the income of a cornetcy. This irresistible hero had formed designs against the heart of your Louisa—and besieged it with all the powerful artillery of seducing flattery—I was addressed with more fine speeches in an hour, than I had heard in my life—however, my heart, free and disingaged as it was, with-

withstood the attack, and cruelly devoted my swain to anguish and despair, if he is a man of his word.

How equally unlike the pedant and the coxcomb, is the all accomplished, worthy Mr. Fitzhenry; he is generally my partner; indeed I wish he always was, he is so sensible and agreeable, so friendly, and at the same time so respectable a character, that it is an honour to be seen with him.—I trespassed a little upon the privileges of decorum at the last ball we were at, and asked him to dance with me, as I could not endure to be persecuted the whole evening with the somnific conversation of young Dalton.

I am sure your tenderness for me will hint to you the necessity of a speedy reply to Lord Courtney, which is the only way to release me from his importunities, for though his son is pretty quiet, he is teasing even to impertinence. If I speak to any gentleman in his hearing, he cries, “Ah! my little cuz—take care, or we shall be jealous:”—and though I have repeatedly assured him, in terms not to be mistaken, that I can
never

never marry his son, he persists in saying, he is too much of an old soldier to take a woman at her word in love affairs. He puts me out of all patience, and Fanny does nothing but laugh at my perplexity; she is the wildest girl!—yet I don't think she has regained a perfect tranquillity; for once, to my great surprize, I caught her in tears—we both started—and she, recollecting herself, instantly snatched up a volume of the Sorrows of Werter, and throwing it upon her toilet, exclaimed, “What a fool I am to suffer a fictitious tale to affect me thus.” This feint, however, did not pass upon me—reading was not the cause of her dejection, the book would have lain disregarded had I not made so ill-timed an appearance; yet I suffered her to exult in the fancied success of her innocent deceit. She struggles to conquer her unfortunate attachment, and I should be inexcusable was I to counteract her laudable endeavours by any unthinking raillery or busy curiosity. She can never be surrounded with more antedotes to the power of the blind Deity than she is at present,

present, and most earnestly do I wish them success:

Lady Wilson has a rout to day, and my watch informs me it is time to dress; Fanny says she dare not offer her respects in unison with mine, for she supposes that I have exposed all her follies and flippancies to your view;—she is very safe in that respect; she is in no danger of forfeiting the affections of any one from her enchanting vivacity, which is the result of innocence, ease, and good humour, and reflects a brilliancy on all her virtues. I ventured to assure her, that she might depend upon sharing your esteem and affection, with your dutiful daughter,

LOUISA STAFFORD.

LETTER LXIII.

LORD DAVENANT TO FRANCIS FITZHENRY, ESQ.

I AM this moment landed in the utmost distraction of mind. The public papers must have informed you of the loss I have sustained in the sudden death

death of the best of fathers.—Meet me I intreat you, with all possible expedition, at Westville Lodge. I cannot write—Heaven knows how much I stand in need of the balm of friendship, it is the only comfort that remains for your poignantly afflicted friend,

DAVENANT.

LETTER LXIV.

COUNTESS OF BELMONT TO LADY LOUISA STAFFORD.

ACCORDING to your desire, my dear, I wrote an answer to Lord Courtenay, in as civil terms as a refusal would admit of; yet has it produced the most extraordinary letter in return I ever read. Passion must have absorbed every other faculty; he accuses me, in a language to which I have been little accustomed, of the most inexcuseable folly in trusting such an heiress as yourself to a third person, and thereby leaving you exposed to the insidious arts of every broken gambler, or scheming fortune-hunter; that I shall find my imprudence

speedily rewarded, by seeing my only child become a prey to their machinations; that you are already in the high road to ruin, and that your refusal of his son, is well known to proceed from a predilection for a sycophantic young fellow of the name of Fitzhenry, who can neither boast of family or fortune, proper to aspire to a connexion with my daughter. He paints you in very different colours from what I have ever viewed you; as a giddy forward coquet. Be assured that I utterly discredit his accusations, which evidently arise from pique and disappointment: your behaviour to his son, is itself a contradiction to such an aspersions, and I shall take the first opportunity to acquaint him with my incredulity on this point. As to the former part of his charge, I sincerely wish it may have been built upon a better foundation; for between ourselves, ever since your first letter introduced me to the character of Mr. Fitzhenry, I have involuntarily "in my mind's eye" selected him from this age of vice and debauchery as the man most likely to ensure

sure to my Louisa, that felicity, which the partial sentiments of a doating mother pronounce her deserving of.

I am more ambitious than ever Lord Courtenay wishes me to be: I entertain more exalted hopes from your wealth than can be answered by its merely multiplying itself—as far as it can assist you in obtaining happiness, I shall esteem it valuable—no further.

Every man paying attention to a woman, whose fortune is superior to his own; is immediately regarded as a fortune-hunter, and too often with undeniable justice; there are notwithstanding, many exceptions to this rule, and I am willing to believe Mr. Fitzhenry is one.

I should not have disclosed my sentiments, as I wish you to be entirely guided by your own heart, which, with all due deference to my noble cousin, I am certain will never lead you contrary to your judgement;—but the style of your last letter made me imagine all necessity for reserve was at an end—I was greatly pleased with it, being so different from

your former ones; in them I could discover no symptoms but of friendship and gratitude; in this there is a warmth of expression, which if not absolutely the result of love, is nearly allied to it—
“How equally unlike the pedant and
“the coxcomb is the all accomplished,
“worthy Mr. Fitzhenry—he is general-
“ly my partner—indeed I wish he al-
“ways was.”—Suppose I make an alteration, and write thus for you—I wish he was to be my partner for *life*—The gradation is very slight between the sentences, and indeed, I believe only exists in sound.—Ask your heart if it submits to the amendment: if it does not, more reserve towards him is adviseable; his attachment to you I think is visible, and I am sure it is not in your disposition to delight in trifling with his peace of mind.

Your amiable friend, I will venture to say, will never forfeit the share which she so early acquired, in my affections.—Vivacity, when under proper regulations, is one of the greatest ornaments of youth.

Write

Write soon; I shall be anxious for the result of your examination; yet I am far from wishing you to be actuated by my sentiments, contrary to your own: that, instead of promoting, would be the most certain means of destroying your happiness, and consequently that of your truly affectionate mother,

CAROLINE BELMONT.

LETTER LXV.

FANNY CLIFTON TO MISS PARKER.

MOURN with me the loss of the charming Fitzhenry! I am the only one who openly laments his departure, for two reasons:—first because Lady Wilton feels it not:—and secondly because Lady Louisa dares not avow her sentiments.—I like that symptom much: she can be under no restraint but a little inward consciousness, which leads her, as it does many other guilty persons, to the surest means of betraying herself. I have never ventured to rally her; it is a tender point with me: I am wretch-

edly afraid of a retort. She caught me in tears the other day: I luckily had an excuse ready, which passed current, and I retained my secret.—'Tis so easy to impose on you gentle quiet souls!—I don't wonder the men prefer you for wives!

“ 'Tis strange, passing strange”—that lady Louisa Stafford and myself, sworn friends as we are, and have been from infancy, should dwell in the same mansion, and be inflicted with the same wound, without having ever reposed our doleful complaints in the sympathizing breasts of each other.—It is true, our engagements afford us little time to be employed in the language of the heart—besides, a confession of folly upon paper, is admirably preferable—to calling one's friend into one's closet—(there are no shady groves here you know) with a woe fraught look;—shutting the door with an air of caution and consequence—drawing two chairs close together—then with an emphatic tone, crying—Alas! my friend! what will become of me?—Such a misfortune—Oh faithless!—faithless
sex;—

sex;—then tears and a pathetic pause of speechless misery, are called in as necessary auxiliaries, to compleat the tender scene—'Tis tremendous work!—No! give me some paper of spotless white, and thereon I will relate the fable history. 'Tis now, I believe, the only way that her ladyship can ever become my confidant, though I think if she had been a little more arch the the other day, I should have betrayed myself; and to say the truth, reserve towards her sits very uneasy upon my mind: yet its commencement was laudable on her account, and the continuance of it necessary on my own—for I am bent upon victory—and if silence, absence, balls, plays, operas, and dear coquetry do not answer my purpose—where must I fly for succour?

Sometimes my thoughts of Lord Davenant are replete with hatred, malice, and all uncharitableness—when in one moment the poor cottagers present themselves to my imagination, surrounded by their little flock of cherubims, and in him I behold their benefactor; he relieves their necessities, secures them from

the power of oppressive tyranny, and the pinching hand of poverty.—Can I see the man, for whom I once felt the warmest friendship, seated under their humble roof—a little smiling partaker of his bounty placed on each knee, striving to excel each other in lisping forth their blessing!—Is this a scene to contemplate with no other sentiment than hatred?—Ah no!—I wish I had remained in ignorance of it—for since it cannot wash away the evil, it serves only to render it the more lamentable—it is not that I think of Lord Davenant with affection.—But why should I think of him at all?

“Of all afflictions taught a lover yet,
“’Tis sure the hardest science to forget:
“Ere such a soul regains its peaceful state,
“How often must it love, how often hate,
“How often hope, despair, resent, regret;
“Conceal, disdain; do all things but forget.”

Mr. Fitzhenry was called from us to attend a friend in affliction—When he took leave of us, his sympathetic soul seemed even then to have become a sharer in his grief—what a valuable friend!—

I wonder

I wonder who is the possessor of so rare and inestimable a treasure.

Write soon my dear Maria: you are very idle, though my best thanks are your due for your kind attention to my aunt, who informs me that you often call upon her.

I suppose Miss Beville's famous expedition to Scotland, which makes such a figure in the papers, has set E—— in an uproar; I shall expect the whole history from you. I am truly sorry for her friends, but more so for herself, as I fear her punishment will be even more than adequate to her folly.

You have read I suppose an account of the sudden death of the Earl of Westville, an event which in all probability will recall his son—Heaven grant we may not meet;—not that I doubt my own stability—yet I own it is a rencontre I wish to avoid. Adieu, ever your's

FANNY CLIFTON.

LETTER LXVI.

LADY LOUISA STAFFORD TO THE COUNTESS OF
BELMONT.

I KNOW not how to write!—your letter has involved me in a maze of astonishment, from which I cannot disengage myself: what conjectures you have formed! What questions you propose! such as I feel myself utterly unable to answer—yet if I know myself, I am free from any softer sentiment than friendship and esteem. So far I will allow, that judging comparatively of the sensations of my heart towards Mr. Fitzhenry and any other person, the scale so greatly preponderates in preference of him, that I cannot wonder at the misjudging world giving my partiality the appellation of love.

I will here give you the true state of my situation with regard to him, and leave you to draw your own conclusions.

In the first place, I must acknowledge that I am ever happy in his company :
that

that I experience the most solid satisfaction in his conversation.—On the other hand, I feel no uneasy sensations similar to what I once endured: his attention to others, affects me not with one jealous pang; and, though his presence gives me pleasure, his absence never occasioned me one moment's discontent, till this day, when he left town without fixing a time for his return. Truth obliges me to confess, that since his departure, I have felt a discomposure of which I cannot entirely divest myself: but, dear madam, should I not feel the same upon an unlimited separation from Miss Clifton.

You can form no idea of the surprize your letter excited.—What a troublesome old man is Lord Courtenay!—and what grateful acknowledgements are due to you for so kindly defeating his rancour.—He requested the favour of an hour's conversation with me: we were accordingly closeted,—and I supported the task of listening to a lecture an hour long, without being in the smallest degree benefitted by his documents. I am

sorry I have been a means of subjecting you to the violent effects of a temper so irascible.

I believe you have ever known me better than I know myself. Self-knowledge is a science too deep for my attainment—otherwise I would make a merit of displaying to the view of my dearest mother, every sensation and emotion whatever that can vibrate the heart of her

LOUISA STAFFORD.

The Carlton family are arrived: the illness and death of the Countess's father has till now detained them in the country: we have met several times; their lovely niece is entirely disregarded by them.

At first, though it was what she expected, her sensibility felt a severe shock at their neglect. If I am capable of reading the language of the eyes, Lord Clifton and Lady Eliza, the second daughter, do not inherit the disposition of their parents, the first is about a year older than my friend, and seems to be a wild good natured honest fellow, with

an

an excellent heart, but an unthinking head: by that term, I do not mean to imply a want of sense, which is far from being the case; but a certain docility or suppleness of mind, which proves the bane of many an honest sensible man. He has been introduced to me by the desire of his family, as I have been informed, with orders to pay his addresses to my ladyship—Oh fortune! fortune! what a bait art thou—at least to that prudent part of the world who have passed the criterion of thirty years. 'Tis not so magnetic to the wandering eyes of nineteen, and those of my young swain, if I do not greatly mistake, momentarily confess the superior influence of the enchanting graces of his lovely cousin.

Lady Eliza, who is about seventeen, seems to have a kindred soul with our Fanny: her looks are replete with affection, though she dares not speak.

My postscript is as long as my epistle itself.—Pray give my love to Miss Mof-tyn, I am sorry I have not time at present to answer her very affectionate letter.

L E T-

L E T T E R LXVII.

MISS PARKER TO MISS CLIFTON.

E—— is indeed in an uproar—and the distress of the unfortunate family, renders them truly pitiable. Mr. Beville has honoured me with two visits since the unhappy event: he, poor man, is inconsolable, and a great aggravation of his affliction is, that all his efforts and entreaties have hitherto proved ineffectual, and that his father and mother continue inexorable.

He acknowledges that he was alarmed at the encreasing intimacy between his sister and the young stranger I mentioned to you sometime since, long before their elopment, but from a false delicacy, he had been prevented, either expostulating with her, or warning his father of the danger that awaited her, as his reason dictated.

No one here knows more of the young man than his name, and that he is a native of Ireland. He left all the debts which he
had

had contracted during his residence in this town unpaid; which, however, his worthy brother-in-law has taken care to discharge as secretly as possible. Ten thousand pounds bequeathed to Miss Beville by her grandmother, of which she became mistress the day before her elopement (being then arrived at the age of twenty-one) proved the source of her misfortune. The young man is a few months younger than his bride, though old in artifice as you may judge, from the ingenuity of his management. He left E—— a few days before the execution of his scheme: taking leave of his friends, and lamenting the necessity he was under of joining his regiment. Miss Beville, previous to his departure, intimated an intention of passing a few days with her friend Miss Y—— after her birth day, upon which she gave a ball.

The next morning she accordingly set out on horseback, attended by one servant, whom it is now supposed she selected for his uncommon stupidity: when she arrived at the village of *****, under a pretence of being greatly incommoded

commoded by the cold, she alighted at the Wolf's Head, which scarcely deserves the name of an inn. She had not been many minutes in the house, before she returned to the door where her horses stood, and said—" Oh! John, it is very
" lucky that I called here, for I have
" met with Miss Y——, who will take
" me home with her; therefore you may
" leave the pormanteau and return.

This plan operated so well, that no suspicion arose till the third day after her elopment, when a servant of the Y—— family coming to market, was charged with compliments to Sir Edward and Lady Beville, and a letter for their daughter: this gave them the first alarm, but it was too late for pursuit; all the satisfaction they could gain, was hearing from the village, that she had set off from thence in a chaise and four with a young officer.

Sir Edward has since received a letter from each of them, dated Newcastle, from whence they were to proceed to Bath, where they hoped to meet with a gracious answer. Mr. Beville, says with concern,
that

that his father was not addressed in the penitential or supplicating stile suitable to their situation, and which he had flattered himself would have added weight to his solicitations in their favour.

I have now, though most wretchedly, executed your commands. Indeed my spirits were scarcely equal to the task. Some afflicting intelligence I have received from Bengal, I fear will prove too great a trial for your weak friend.

My poor brother, whose fraternal kindness I have so extensively experienced, is now languishing under various calamities both of body and mind. Repeated losses have made an entire wreck of his former gains, and his constitution is falling a prey to a climate, from which his creditors will not suffer him to depart. These, alas! are miseries, I have little means of relieving.

The feeble power of which I am possessed, I have exerted; by calling in half my small fortune, which I shall remit to him by the next ship.

To service of millinary, or some employment of that kind, of which I thank
God

God I am very capable, I must apply, for some addition to the remainder, and most amply shall I think myself rewarded, if I can behold my brother, and share with him the fruits of my labour.

Mr. Beville unfortunately called at the moment I received the dreadful packet: he found me overwhelmed in tears: his generous soul cannot be a witness of affliction without partaking of it: he tenderly enquired into the cause, and as far as related to the illness of my brother I informed him—no further:—I know not why, but I felt an invincible repugnance to acquainting him with the whole. His appearance at that moment was peculiarly unfortunate: my grief drew from him such tender, and even affectionate expressions, that my great embarrassment, which I found it impossible to disguise, has, I fear, betrayed me: this is a conjecture which adds an unsupportable weight to my distress. The encrease of his visits latterly has greatly perplexed me; I feared the censure of the world, yet knew not how to extricate myself: my present situation

tion removes the difficulty, and affords me a melancholy opportunity of declining them, as prudence will now confine me to one room, till I can suit myself more eligibly: consequently all visits must be resigned.

In the very moment in which I am committing an error, I am likewise repenting of it: if my misfortunes should throw a cloud over your happiness, however transient, I should not be able to pardon myself for making you acquainted with it.

Grieve not for me I entreat you—look around my friend, and you will find such myriads who have a true claim to your compassion; that rich as you are in that heaven born attribute, you will not find one atom to squander upon the fancied evils of your Maria, whose right to the word arises only from speaking comparatively of the former blessings she has enjoyed.

Thank heaven! I am blessed with fortitude, which I hope will support me through the calamities of life. I am likewise indebted to the divine providence

dence for an uncommon share of health, which is in itself a comfort far above what any emperor can boast without it.

Give my best respects to Lady Louisa Stafford. Write soon, for your letters afford infinite pleasure to your devoted friend

MARIA PARKER.

LETTER LXVIII.

MISS CLIFTON TO MISS PARKER.

YOU forbid me to grieve for your sufferings Maria!—Forbid me likewise to breathe, yet command me to live and I shall have equal power to obey you!—No! my friend! you must not forbid me to share in your misfortunes you must allow me to sympathize with with you, and endeavour to alleviate them.—Are we not sisters?—Are we not more firmly united by the ties of affection and friendship, than even those of blood have power to bind?—Then why should not our actions co-operate with our sentiments?—Let us live together

gether Maria; your whole fortune may then be devoted to the gratification of your sisterly affection, we are not extravagant: mine is sufficient to supply us both with every comfort of life, and could I, if my six thousand pounds were multiplied to as many hundreds, purchase so valuable a satisfaction as the enjoyment of your company.

Lady Louisa instantly remarked the sudden change which the perusal of your afflicting letter wrought upon the countenance of your unhappy Fanny; I explained to her the melancholy cause, and her own became equally descriptive of the poignancy of her concern.

Though I am alone and unable to engage in any other employment, I cannot write. My spirits are cowards, and always forsake me when they are most necessary. I shall wait for your letter: then hold myself in readiness to quit London, and to receive you under my humble roof, as a most welcome guest to your

F. CLIFTON.

L E T-

LETTER LXIX.

THE COUNTESS OF BELMONT TO LADY LOUISA
STAFFORD,

YOU allow me to draw my own conclusions—then I hesitate not to pronounce that your susceptible heart has again resigned its freedom, and yielded to an attachment, which I sincerely hope will prove more permanent than the first, and meet with a reciprocal affection.

I am charmed with the prospect of an union, from which I cannot help forming an imaginary foresight of many solid comforts, unknown to the dissipated or the avaricious.

I have some fears on the part of your father, but we must wait with patience: Providence will, I trust, in time, awaken him from his present state of infatuation, and recall him to the duties of a parent. As to Mr. Fitzhenry's sentiments, I think all his actions renders them sufficiently obvious.

How

How quick sighted are we to our own merits—to our own firmness and stability: how greatly you deserve commendations, my love, for your fortitude in withstanding the pangs of jealousy, whilst a certain gentleman devoted to others merely the indispensable tribute of common civility, and you received from him the tender and affectionate attention of a lover.—'Tis equally wonderful that his absence, which I suppose was always circumscribed by the lazy progress of a few hours, should prove no interruption to your repose; and insufficient to deprive your breast of its wonted serenity. I cannot help smiling at the innocence and *naïveté* with which you have discovered the sentiments of your heart.

Was vanity my prevailing foible, a proposal of an alliance with the Carleton family would be too flattering to be rejected; but as people grow old, they grow whimsical, and I confess my views have a very different tendency. I am shocked at the Earl's unnatural behaviour towards his niece, she is a sweet girl, give my love to her. I hope when you return, you
will

will prevail upon her to accompany you.

You are now my love, arrived at that critical period, which must arouse every anxiety in the parental bosom—an age, from which, in general, the future happiness or misery of life is dated—an age surrounded by dangers from the want of that rare, though necessary accomplishment, self knowledge: whilst we are ignorant of our own temper, foibles, and caprices—whilst we are contented with the superficial part of our own character, it is not to be wondered at, that we are caught by the more external qualifications of another.—Endeavour my love to acquire a perfect knowledge of the sentiments of your own heart, and pursue its dictates; I am confident it will not mislead you, provided you understand its language.—Be careful of your own happiness, my dear girl, if you value the last remaining comfort of your doating mother,

CAROLINE BELMONT.

LETTER LXX.

MISS PARKER TO MISS CLIFTON.

WHAT must I say my dear Miss Clifton! I was before afflicted; but the feelings I have excited in your breast, wounds mine even more than its own.

Think you so meanly of me as to suppose that I could submit to your becoming a sharer in my misfortunes? I possess one sentiment, which neither time nor circumstance can change; perhaps it may be too nearly allied to pride; but it is of such a nature that it will never permit me to become a burthen to my friends.

Was I to endeavour to give language to the overflowings of my heart, for the sincerity and nobleness of your friendship, I am sensible how inadequate to the subject it would prove: as a bad argument injures a good cause, so would my words do injustice to my sentiments. Therefore to your candour I must ap-

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peal,

peal, and to your friendship submit a judgment of mine.

Now let me entreat and conjure you, not to suffer a thought of me to pervert your happiness; 'tis attacking me on my most vulnerable side. If you wish not to deprive me intirely of comfort, let your next be dictated by your usual spirits, flowing spontaneously from a heart at ease. Do not grieve for me, if you think me totally depressed by my misfortunes, you imagine that I am much weaker than I am. Heaven forbid that I should be so unthankful for the many blessings Divine Providence still permits me to enjoy, as to repine because I am not distinguished above my fellow-creatures, with the possession of perfect felicity unallayed and undisturbed. I can from my heart assure you, that I have not a wish which favourable dispatches from abroad have not the power to gratify.

Walking towards home the other morning, I had a rencontre with Mr. Beville, who accosted me in his usual friendly manner, and said he was coming to pay me a visit: this was an opportunity

portunity not to be neglected, and I in a tremulous tone, said, "I hope Mr. Beville will not be offended, or think me ungrateful for the honour of his friendship, when I confess that I am under the disagreeable necessity of declining his visits, together with those of all my friends, as I have not now a room to receive them in."—Never was surprize or concern more strikingly expressed than upon the countenance of this worthy man upon this declaration.—Recovering at length from his astonishment, "Will you, Miss Parker," said he, "suffer me to presume upon the privileges of friendship, and ask you what is the *true* cause of this mysterious seclusion."

"Certainly," replied I, "notwithstanding it may wear the appearance of mystery to the world, (to own the truth I was hurt at his application of the term) be assured that there is no part of my conduct, which I am ashamed to confess, or the motives by which I have been actuated; and to you, Sir, whose friendship I esteem

“ as the highest honour, I am happy in
“ having this opportunity of explaining
“ them. The true cause of my present
“ mode of living being more contracted
“ than formerly, is, that my small for-
“ tune having suffered a diminution,
“ obliges me to lessen my expences pro-
“ portionably. This, I hope, will prove
“ a sufficient excuse for any appearances
“ against me, at least in the eyes of Mr.
“ Beville, and all equally worthy as
“ himself.”

“ Forgive, my dearest Miss Parker,”
returned he, “ the haste and improper
“ warmth into which the utmost surprize
“ and concern could alone have betray-
“ ed me; be assured that I am perfectly
“ convinced that your actions will ever
“ command, as well as merit the ap-
“ probation of the world; and I sincere-
“ ly grieve that the most amiable of her
“ sex is not the most happy.”

By this time we were arrived at the
door of my lodgings, which put an end
to our conversation and obliged me to
wish him a good morning.—Excuse the
vanity which appears in this relation, and
though

though I do not pretend to disclaim so prevalent an error; do not attribute it wholly to self love; for you must confess, that indirect contradiction to common flatterers, the whole merit of Mr. Beville's praises reverted to himself, and displayed the benevolence of his mind; he spoke the genuine language of his heart, compassion in such breasts as his frequently passes for approbation in the eyes of the charitable and the worthy; affliction has the power of obliterating errors, and every good quality is magnified by misfortunes.

The next day I received a note from Lady Beville, with an invitation to reside with her as long as agreeable to myself, written in the most polite and friendly terms. I was greatly affected by this act of kindness, particularly as I was sensible to whose friendly intercessions it was owing.

I waited upon her ladyship the next day, and endeavoured to make such poor return as words would admit of. I acquainted her with every circumstance of my situation, together with your gene-

rous kindness, and that spirit of independency which pervades my breast, and makes me prefer servitude to obligations which I never can return.

Her ladyship made me many flattering compliments, and kindly lamented my resolution. Before I took my leave, she spoke of the shock she had sustained in the imprudence of her only daughter, on whom she doated with even more than maternal fondness. She wept with all the tender feeling of a mother; yet declared with a firmness absolutely terrifying, that although as a Christian she forgave her, she would never again bestow upon her that parental affection which she had so wantonly and so ungratefully forfeited. Dreadful as this determination appeared, I durst not attempt a single remonstrance in favour of my friend. It is not now, in the very heat of resentment, that any hopes can be formed from the most persuasive arguments; time is the most sovereign mollifier, and I sincerely hope will produce a reconciliation between the poor imprudent

dent Miss Beville and her offended parents.

How do you go on with your flirt Lord Fitzroy, have you profited by my advice? let me know all your proceedings: I absolutely forbid one sigh for me, whilst I am myself as gay as a lark. Though I receive no visits, I pay many, I am let into people's houses as freely as when I could make a slight return for their civilities, and I assure you my way of life is more to be envied than pitied.

Now and then I encounter a little impertinent curiosity, and obtain the knowledge of some strange conjectures formed upon the alteration of my plan: 'tis wonderful that a subject of so little importance to the world in general can afford so ample a topic of conversation: I affect no mystery or reserve, but my story is too plain and common; therefore my good neighbours give themselves the trouble of dressing it out with miracles and wonders, which exist only in their own imaginations. Attempting to set them right would be undertaking a

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task

task more arduous than that of town cryer.

My most respectful love and compliments wait upon Lady Louisa Stafford; pray assure her that I feel myself highly honoured by her kind remembrance of me; but that I am truly concerned that it should ever prove the source of a moment's affliction.

Adieu my best friend—what would I not give for words suitable to my feelings—for power to express how sincerely devoted to you is the grateful heart of your

MARIA PARKER.

LETTER LXXI.

MISS CLIFTON TO MISS PARKER.

OH! for the tongue or the pen of a shrew to abuse you as you deserve! what a delightful scheme has your false delicacy overthrown! It appears to me strange sophistry, that the yoke of servitude can be less repugnant to pride, or refined sentiment, than the gentle one
of

of friendship. Can you think, Maria, that I could possibly bestow a favour upon you, in which I should not be an equal sharer? Can you be so much unacquainted with my heart, as to entertain such an idea? consider, my dear friend,—can you, all gentleness as you are, submit to the imperious airs of a mistress, possessed, perhaps of every vice diametrically opposite to your virtues, who, after having exhausted her small share of good humour in dissipation abroad, returns home disappointed of the admiration she was promised by the oracle her looking-glass? a bankrupt at the gaming table, full of spleen and vexation, she revenges all her evils upon you:—you have dressed her head awry, and made her a hideous fright in spite of nature; you threw down the essence bottle, or committed some awkwardness which is ever the certain ensign of ill-fortune—in short, you are the primary cause of every disaster that has befallen her.

This is the life you are determined to espouse in preference to my friendship—Oh that I could yet frame argu-

ments of sufficient weight to induce you to change your purpose. I cannot support the idea of one so formed to shine in the most exalted sphere of life, being degraded to that of a domestic.

You will not suffer human influence to assist you, but I trust the merciful disposer of events reserves for you a state of happiness, of which we mortals can have no foresight.

You ask me how I go on with *my flirt* Lord Fitzroy:—thank my stars! he has now no right to the dignity of that title: his devours are reduced to the happy medium of a frigid compli^{an}ce:—all owing to my cruelty to be sure: you imagine not, I hope, that my slaves can by any other means be released from their captivity.

I believe I have never informed you that I have seen my *worthy* uncle and aunt Carlton and their family; they have been arrived about a fortnight. We seldom meet except in public, as they fortunately do not visit Lady Wilson. To our general astonishment, by order of the higher powers, the young Lord Clifton

is become a candidate for the favour of Lady Louisa Stafford; and that he might prosecute his suit with every advantage, they have got him introduced as a guest at this house. All in vain I think, I foresee, as old Hardy says, that the young couple will agree admirably in a *dis-union* with each other:—Only conceive how he has degenerated from his noble ancestors; he is even so vulgar as to make a favourite of his insignificant cousin, and indeed he has obtained a great share of my good will. He is an honest, good humoured fellow as ever existed, and is literally no one's enemy but his own.

Lady Eliza, the second of my female cousins, is beauty, elegance and good humour combined, I feel the *hauteur* of her parents most sensibly in obstructing my intimacy with this lovely girl.

We were one day seated together on a sofa in a retired corner of a room, whether by accident or design on her part I know not, but am inclined to imagine the latter, as she with the utmost sweetness entered into conversation with

me, and took that opportunity of lamenting the unhappy breach between our families: "Such animosities," said she, "have generally trifles for their foundation, and exist merely upon some ridiculous punctilio; but whatever may be their origin, they are certainly burthens, which posterity has an undoubted right to disclaim; and was I my own mistress, I should before have endeavoured to cultivate a friendship with one who possesses the esteem and admiration of all who know her."

I had scarcely time to make any reply to these flattering compliments, before we were separated by the countess, who with fire-darting eyes, hastily deprived me of my lovely companion. Her eldest daughter seems an exact counterpart of herself, she never passes me but with a look of ineffable disdain. Lady Eliza has not ventured to speak since, though her countenance declares the contrariety between her silence and her sentiments; neither dare her brother acknowledge me

me as a relation in public, though at home we are excellent friends.

Mrs. Crofts is a delightful Woman, she has done more for Fitzhenry in a quarter of an hour, than his own sighs would have accomplished in an age. She called here this morning, and assisted by the fiends jealousy and revenge against the superior charms of our fair friend, she fabricated a tale to persuade us that he was upon the point of marriage with a lady to whom he had been contracted from infancy. This information threw Lady Louisa into a tremble; and, but for my timely assistance, she would certainly have fainted. I boldly declared, that I could give no credit to the report, and said, that I was confident Mr. Fitzhenry would not have remained a month absent from his mistress upon the very eve of his nuptials. Mrs. Crofts, however, supported her argument, though she could quote no author but common fame: my disposition, you know, is not untinged with obstinacy; therefore we had a warm debate, during which, her ladyship stole out

out of the room, possessed of a piece of new acquired knowledge, which I fear will prove rather a troublesome intruder, till matters have undergone a farther explanation, which I sincerely hope will terminate in the mutual happiness of the worthy pair.

My good opinion of Mrs. Crofts begins to relax ; this malicious tale, which was manufactured by her own inventive brain, with one or two of other circumstances has greatly tended to its decay. I have observed latterly, a levity in her conduct, not altogether consonant to my ideas of vivacity ;——perhaps I may wrong her ; nobody has made the same remark ; therefore my conjectures are merely *entre nous*.

What an inconsistency exists through the whole race of men mortals ! Captain Droitville, whom I regarded as a perfect pattern of steadiness and propriety, and, for uniformity, resembling clock-work, has of a sudden wheeled round to the very opposite point of the compass, and become more unaccountable than any of his uncertain sex. He has entirely dis-
carded

carded his old friend, and will now scarcely speak to me; when he does, it is with the rigid formality of fourscore, whilst, to others, he adopts the pretty juvenile air of eighteen, equally contrary to his former self: I can scarcely forbear laughing at this preposterous change, and my countenance has suffered severely from the restraint civility imposes upon it.

The mystery of this farce is too profound for my penetration; but time which unravels all things, will, no doubt, solve the enigma.

Write soon, Maria, if you value my friendship, it behoveth you to alter your plan, and not to let your pride get the better of your reason. I am still in readiness, and anxious to attend your summons. Pray, pray, do not be perverse, for the love of our mutual comfort, for the love of yourself, and for the love of your very sincere friend,

F. CLIFTON.

LET.

LETTER LXXII.

LADY LOUISA STAFFORD TO THE COUNTESS OF
BELMONT.

NEVER again, my dear and honoured mother, will I dispute your superior judgment : you are right, and most unhappily so, notwithstanding your unparalleled kindness. You hope this attachment will prove more permanent than a former one ; alas ! I fear it will ! and that even the union which is daily expected to take place, will not release me from its influence ; and, that I shall be betrayed by my own weakness into the criminality of loving the husband of another.

Mr. Fitzhenry could not fix a time for his return ; he had not the smallest intention of returning : the story he told us, I imagine, was framed merely to impose upon our credulity ; or, at any rate, could only be a secondary motive for his departure, as it is well known he is upon the point of marriage with a
lady

lady to whom he has been contracted some years. Fanny persists in discrediting the report, and declares it is only the lie of the day, founded upon malice or disappointed love. I ventured to inquire, in a careless manner, the reason of her incredulity.—“Lord, child! do you
“ think I ever speak without reason?—I
“ could give you reasons by the hundred ;—but, if reason was out of the
“ question—why should we cherish ideal
“ grievances ?”

“Grievances,” reiterated I, a conscious glow overspreading my face,
“ could Mr. Fitzhenry’s marriage possibly be productive of any ? certainly,
“ all his friends must rejoice in his happiness.”

“ Your Ladyship, perhaps, might rejoice,” said the teasing Girl ; “ but
“ for my part, I am not so disinterested
“ —I am half in love with him myself !
“ —and think what a disgrace it would
“ be to us both, if he should, after being exposed to the irresistible battery
“ of our eyes for a whole month, have
“ escaped unhurt at last !—only consider
“ der

“ der that, and your vanity will take
“ the alarm as well as mine!—but fear
“ not—I’ll lay my life he is a devoted
“ slave to one of us, and I’m greatly
“ apprehensive, that the odds are in fa-
“ vour of your ladyship.”

Certainly, if Mr. Fitzhenry was under an engagement, his behaviour has not been entirely defensible: had I been his destined lady, I should have thought such inattention very incompatible with a sincere affection.

As it is, my situation is as uneasy and disagreeable as it is uncommon: could I form any pretext for leaving London, I would instantly return home; but you kindly suffered me to promise Lady Wilton, that my stay should only be limited by hers and Miss Clifton’s, a permission which I joyfully embraced, and an engagement from which I cannot disengage myself with civility.

I dread the sight of a newspaper: I never touch one myself; and if any one begins with, “ Such a day was married,” I tremble, and can scarcely keep my seat

feat to hear the remainder of the paragraph.

I know not why, but I dare not repose a confidence in Fanny; she rallies me unmercifully as it is, whenever we are alone, but kindly spares me in company.

We are to have a private concert here this evening; Fanny and myself are to be performers. My friend's vocal powers are astonishing, and, I think, improve daily. Lord Clifton, who has likewise a very fine voice, is to accompany his cousin in a duet. I am, for the first time, happy that singing is no talent of mine; for to sing in affliction must be a painful task indeed.

I am this moment called to the harp-fichord, as our party is assembled to rehearse, therefore, can only say, that I am ever, your dutiful

LOUISA STAFFORD.

LET-

LETTER LXXIII.

MISS PARKER TO MISS CLIFTON.

WHAT a frightful picture have you drawn of my future life; I allow it has many unfavourable traits, but your portrait is a caricature doubly distorted; yet, dreadful as it is, and supposing it no more than a just and candid representation of servitude, it should not induce me to relinquish or alter my purpose: I would embrace its every horror rather than submit to the reproaches of my own conscience, which would never suffer me to live in idleness upon the bounty of my friends with impunity. I know your kind anxiety for my happiness, and be assured, I will not be myself unmindful of it: I am not, thank Heaven! under a necessity of fixing rashly; such a situation as you describe, I shall particularly guard against: high life I shall most carefully avoid. My hopes centre in procuring the office of Governess to the younger part of some worthy

worthy family in a moderate sphere of life, in which I cannot see any thing less eligible, or less productive of happiness than my present situation affords. What do I lose by the exchange?—I have not the pride of a noble family to support—my parents were worthy—theirs were no less so, who, by honest industry, left to their successors a comfortable competency, which, in order to encrease, they threw into the fluctuating tide of commerce, and, by a gust of fortune, they and their offspring were exalted above themselves; thus I acquired my education, and thus was I intoxicated with false hopes of affluence. The veil is now withdrawn; and ought I to repine at being recalled to that mediocrity which is my just inheritance.

Could I be assured of my brother's welfare, my mind would be perfectly at ease: his illness, and the alteration of my circumstances from little to less, by dividing my attention, has happily reduced a passion which has long preyed upon my peace of mind, to the proper bounds of friendship and esteem.

How

How variable and uncertain is the human mind : in my last I related to you the undeserved kindness I received upon my misfortunes from Sir Edward and Lady Beville : yesterday I waited upon them by invitation ; and, judge of my amazement, when, upon entering the room, I perceived the most mortifying coldness had taken place of that friendly warmth which had, till that moment, manifested itself in those trivial circumstances which I have ever regarded as the truest pictures of the mind. Sir Edward and his lady were seated on a sofa, and were evidently engaged in a very interesting conversation, as, upon my appearance, they started, and each darted upon me a look, in which contempt, anger, and confusion were blended. The day, owing to their new and unaccountable behaviour, afforded me nought but a succession of embarrassments, from which it was impossible to disengage myself, as their unkindness, though most acutely expressive, was silent :—words may be answered ; but there is a manner, which, whilst

whilst it even supports a degree of cold civility, wounds deeper than the most indignant language.

It is said, that conscious innocence will ever inspire true courage : this event, proves the fallacy of such reasoning : upon such doctrine I should be condemned ; yet is my conscience clear as purity itself, from any offence towards the Beville family. Perfectly free as I was from self-accusation, I found an approving mind unable to secure me from the most tormenting sensations : never did a poor culprit rejoice more in his acquittal than I did, when the clock struck eight, at being released from a visit in which I had undergone the severest agitations.

This event proved a transient addition to the little evils which have lately interwoven themselves in the fortune of your Maria. How inexpressibly keen would the wound have been, had I accepted of their proffered bounty ; I am well convinced there is not a calamity incident to human nature which does not bring with it a negative comfort.

will

Will you suffer me to offer the conduct of Sir Edward and Lady Beville, as a testimony that my sentiments were not entirely futile and groundless.—No! when I consider to whom this is addressed, I must acknowledge it is none; my heart feels a firm conviction, that you are infinitely superior to all unsteadiness and caprice.—Yet, my dear friend, I know the value of your friendship, and knowing it as I do, will not endanger the loss of it for all the riches of the East. I am sensible, it is a gem of that delicate texture which is certain to receive an irreparable crush under the weight of obligation. All the familiar ease, the freedom, and that equality which flows from independance would be lost;—when the tender name of friend is exchanged for that of benefactress, love becomes gratitude, and every act of kindness, the mere performance of a duty.—To oblige, ennobles—but it requires a mind superior, I fear, to mine, to receive an obligation without being debased.

In

In addition to what I have already said, you must permit me to hint, that there are some reasons which would have induced me to have accepted Sir Edward and Lady Beville's offer in preference to yours, as well as others in the opposite scale. Dare I, after what has been said, avow, that I still think it possible, that you may not always be as free and independent of the world as you are at present? That there may be, at some future period, calls upon your fortune, which may make you condemn your former liberality? Yes, my dear Miss Clifton, notwithstanding your anger, I acknowledge these are sentiments which encrease my natural repugnance to a life of idleness, and continual encroachments on the unbounded generosity of friendship. Therefore assure me, my dear friend.—Urge me no more to relinquish a resolution, which can alone secure me from the bitterness of adversity. Nothing can impress my mind with an higher sense of your kindness than what I already possess; nor can I add any assurances to those I have repeatedly

made, to convince you that my determination is most steadfast and unalterable.—Adieu, my dear friend; believe me with the utmost love and gratitude ever yours.

MARIA PARKER.

LETTER LXXIV.

MISS CLIFTON TO MISS PARKER.

MY sweet moralizing friend!—"My
 "Plato in petticoats—And must
 "I be sermonized out of my darling
 "scheme?" 'Tis pitiful, 'tis wond-
 'rous pitiful—but I fear the fates are
 against me; and thy "tongue is the pen
 "of a ready writer." I can deal a little
 in sentences and pretty sayings, you see;
 but I confess I am most dreadfully foiled
 —yet I have one recourse, I can scold;
 and with that intention solely I took up
 my pen:—though, upon second thoughts,
 I will not.—What signifies scolding,
 when I know my pupil is incorrigible?
 —"My determination is steadfast and
 "unalterable"—No doubt, as the laws
 of the Medes and Persians. Seriously, if
 I could

I could suffer such a passion as anger to to rage in my breast, against one so dear to me as yourself; I should not soon forgive an insinuation which, I must say, expresses an ungenerous doubt of my sincerity: I have repeatedly assured you, that my heart can never feel a second attachment, and I know no cause that you can have to mistrust my veracity: but since you have said so much upon the subject, I will say no more, though it is a silence which will cost me many a painful sensation; but convinced as I am, that breaking it would avail nothing, I will keep it most inviolably.

We go on here as usual; engagements succeed engagements, even with more rapidity than one day follows another: I, however find means now and then to reserve to myself an interval of rest.

Captain Droitville has deserted us: he quitted England on Friday last. A letter which he wrote under sail, and which I received yesterday, affected me most sensibly; I staid at home and shed many tears for his weakness. He calls

me the destroyer of his peace ; tells me, that 'tis I who have banished him, and says, that his affection for me commenced with the earliest period of our acquaintance. Lord Fitzroy, he then regarded as the only obstacle to his happiness ; hoping, however, (as love and hope are inseparable) that time would remove it ; in which he was right ; but other difficulties presented themselves ; he found my heart was obdurate : I esteemed him, but no more : he did not declare his sentiments, as he too plainly saw a repulse would be the consequence, which he found himself unable to support : he then changed his mode of behaviour ; paid that attention to others which he before devoted solely to myself, but all in vain ; he found his only refuge was in flight.

Such was the purport of his letter—I was concerned—deeply concerned.—I have, however, the comfortable reflection to alleviate my grief, that my conduct has been perfectly unblameable towards him. I confess, that I indulge myself in a little playful coquetry, more than
the

the rigid part of the world may allow to be excusable; but there is a volatility in my disposition, which all their sage maxims, with my own prudence combined, will be insufficient to repress till youth and health desert their station: yet I can with truth affirm, that I have never trifled with any man's peace, whose mind has been susceptible of a wound; and I trust I shall ultimately prove, that although I cannot steer clear from errors, I keep within the line of such as candour may forgive, though it cannot entirely overlook.

What can the Bevilles mean? The word caprice is copious and extensive, but not sufficiently so to elucidate their enigmatical and unpardonable conduct. They are actuated by some secret spring which the wheel of time will expose to view;—I cannot, however, wait its long progress, I must form my own conjectures; they, however, can injure no one, as they shall never pass the confines of my own mind.

I dare not talk to you concerning yourself, as I should even fear to have my

questions answered:—if you can tell me of any thing that contributes to your happiness; believe me, you will impart no inconsiderable share of it to the breast of your

F. CLIFTON.

My heart vibrates with delight! I have received a letter addressed to Lady Louisa, and know the character to be Fitzhenry's. 'Tis charming to be the messenger of glad tidings—yet I will not indulge myself in the satisfaction:—she would be distressed if she knew this billet-doux had passed through my hands: she is paying morning visits with Lady Wilson; I will lay it upon her dressing-table and return.

I forgot to tell you, that between Lord Clifton and myself there exists a violent friendship—I am his monitor;—being wise, sage and prudent, he has elected me his mentor:—he keeps a regular journal for my inspection: he suffers me to chide or advise, and is even good-humoured enough to seem pleased with my commendations. I
hope

hope I have nearly vanquished his strong propensity for the gaming table, and have been one means of separating him from a set of sharpers who knew too well how to play upon the natural ease of his temper. The resentment I feel against his family for their unkindness, would make any little service, in my power to render them, doubly grateful to myself.

The ladies are returned : I must at last lay down my pen. Give the inclosed to my aunt.

L E T T E R LXXV.

LADY LOUISA STAFFORD TO THE COUNTESS OF BELMONT.

DEAR Madam peruse the enclosed :
I can make no comments upon it.—
My agitation is insupportable ; the contending emotions which pervade my heart are distracting.—Can I know that I am beloved by the most amiable of mankind, and not rejoice ?—yet can I reflect that I am never more to behold him,

H 4

without

without misery? Oh fortune! fortune! where are thy advantages? Thou canst allure the worthless, but thou art shunned by the truly worthy:—the only man on whom I can ever wish to bestow the superfluous wealth I was born to inherit, scorns, disregards and rejects it.

Dear Madam write soon, and indulge me in returning the cruel letter which has given an indelible wound to the peace of your

LOUISA STAFFORD.

LETTER LXXVI.

MR. FITZHENRY TO LADY LOUISA STAFFORD.

LADY WILSON kindly importuned me to return—To return and again enjoy the society of the charming inhabitants of her house, in which I have experienced the most supreme felicity; yet is it a bliss I am obliged to resign, that I may not by imprudently indulging myself in a transient gratification, give additional poignancy to future misery.

Was

Was I once honoured with your ladyship's friendship? have I been so highly distinguished? or was it merely a visionary idea created by my presumptuous fancy? if the former, suffer me to implore, that whilst as a friend I venture to expose every secret of my heart to your view, I may not thereby forfeit the title.

Will you not start with indignation, when I declare that 'tis your fair self, whose charms I dare not again behold! whom from the moment of our accidental meeting, from an irresistible impulse I have been compelled to adore.— Oh suspend that cruel interdiction! suffer my crime to be my punishment:— that I love is my misfortune—that I have ventured to declare the unwarrantable passion is my fault: but when you consider that it is my first and only offence, and when I solemnly protest that it shall likewise be my last: can you utterly condemn me? I write without hope—I aspire to nothing more than your friendship and your pity, and was I not convinced of the impossibility of one so

unworthy as myself inspiring your mind with a softer sentiment, I would not indulge myself with this transitory relief.—No! may you possess every earthly happiness in that exalted sphere of life in which you were born to shine—can the man who truly loves wish to degrade the object of his affection?—If such love can exist, 'tis of a very different species from that which inhabits my breast.—Think not, I beseech you, that I have now addressed you from any selfish or interested motives—I aim not at the possession of blessings beyond my reach. The miseries of an ill-fated passion await me, and to its horrors I resign myself, which nothing can mitigate but being perfectly convinced of your ladyship's happiness; and pardon me if I cannot conclude without a sigh, that the blissful fate of contributing to, and sharing in your felicity can never be enjoyed by your sincerely devoted

FRANCIS FITZHENRY.

LET-

LETTER LXXVII.

THE COUNTESS OF BELMONT TO MR. FITZHENRY.

SUFFER me, Sir, though a stranger, to address you on a subject which equally concerns us. I have this instant received a letter of yours inclosed in one from my daughter; the contents of which has afforded me infinite satisfaction, although, as I have said, I am not honoured with a personal acquaintance with you; fame will not permit any one to remain in ignorance of the merit of Mr. Fitzhenry, and the noble sentiments contained in the letter before me, convinces me that the opinion of the multitude is not in this instance fallacious. Pardon my freedom—it is the privilege of age: there is no excuse at my time of life for a want of frankness or sincerity. I am not insensible that praise is least agreeable to those who most deserve it: yet, situated as I am, it becomes necessary to explain my motives in defence of my conduct, as from the rash judg-

ing world I do not expect to escape censure.

It may be thought extraordinary that I am so eager to bestow my only child upon one, of whom I know no more than his name and character.

Matrimony is at best a lottery, and no human foresight can pronounce, be the prospects what they may, whether they will be productive of happiness or misery : I know that the former is not to be secured by the splendour of rank; neither are love and poverty synonymous terms ; at least in any of those instances where penury is the offspring of an imprudent attachment.—I am either free from ambition or I have more than my neighbours.—If the latter, it has a very different basis and direction—Titles I despise, and an increase of wealth my daughter wants not.—'Tis to her happiness that I aspire, in that alone consists the sum of all my prayers and wishes ; and in bestowing her upon a worthy man, I trust that under the hand of Providence, I am promoting her felicity.

Obtain therefore her father's consent,
and

and her own, and you may command that of one, who hopes to subscribe herself by a nearer title than your sincere friend,

CAROLINE BELMONT.

LETTER LXXVIII.

MISS CLIFTON TO MISS PARKER.

I AM encompassed with riddles! Fitzhenry's letter which I expected to chase away every cloud, and to be succeeded by the cheering rays of the sun, has involved the fair features of my friend in a gloom still deeper than that by which they were before overcast.

What talisman could the letter contain to work so wonderful an effect! there is but one subject which could possibly be productive of such a correspondence, and that, or I am no conjurer, must be pleasing.—How to reconcile these contradictions I know not—ambition and love are opposite passions, and when existing in the same breast frequently give rise to contending emotions; but this has
nothing

nothing to do with the case in point—Lady Louisa is neither ambitious nor fordid.—Perhaps the countess—No ! 'tis her noble sentiments which have formed the mind of her amiable daughter, whose happiness I am convinced is the summit of her wishes, and whose choice I am certain, where wealth and titles are the only obstacles will never on her part meet with opposition—Lord Belmont indeed—but his actions have certainly absolved his wife and daughter from every tie of duty and obedience towards him, and should he complete his career of vice by disinheriting the latter, he will still leave her one of the first heiresses in the kingdom, as her mother was, when her father instigated by avarice and ambition, united her to misery in the person of an unprincipled profligate, that avarice however, which was instrumental in the sacrifice, now proves a security against some of the inconveniencies of her situation ; Sir Richard, who scrupled not to barter the happiness of his daughter for rank, reserved his more precious gold inviolable, and secured to the

Countess the unrestrained disposal of her own estates.—In short, the more I labour to expound this mystery, the more I involve myself in labyrinths and perplexity : time which brings all things to light, can alone withdraw the impenetrable veil :—impenetrable even to me, who pass for a witch you know in my own country.

The day I wrote last, having finished my epistle (by which time the ladies were returned) I ran down stairs, in order to meet them and tumble over their bargains, as I knew they would call at some shops in their way. However, passing Lady Louisa's chamber door, which was a third part open, I saw she was very differently engaged; the magic seal was broken, and she was at that moment in the act of perusing the important letter. This discovery you may be sure did not impede my flight to Lady Wilson, I proceeded unheard, and found her ladyship as I expected enveloped in gauze, &c.—we soon became equally interested: fashion enslaves us all, we are her votaries when we will not

not ourselves allow it—we passed our time in admiring the works of the celebrated Madame ———, till our monitors informed us that there was but a scanty portion left, for the still more important business of the toilet. That duty performed, we again met, but without being joined by Lady Louisa, whose non-appearance when summoned to dinner alarmed me. I durst not speak, nor had I time before her woman brought apologies for her absence, and informed us that a violent head-ache by which she had been seized upon her return home, made her unable to quit her room. I sat a few minutes, but before the cloth was drawn flew to my friend, whom I found in a situation which impeached the letter of being the true cause of her pain. She leaned upon one hand, whilst the other held the enchanted scroll. She started at my approach, and a suspended tear broke from its confinement, and rolled down that “damask cheek,” on which “concealment like a worm
“i’ th’ bud,” did evidently “prey.”

The

The letter was hastily concealed, and the tear brushed away upon my appearance. I sat down and took her hand: her pulse beat quick, her bosom throbbed and her whole frame was agitated.

“How long has my sweet friend been indisposed? we have racketed I fear, too much for the delicacy of your constitution.”

“No,” replied she, “endeavouring to assume an air of composure, I am not materially ill; a trifling nervous head-ache torments, and renders me unfit for company; I am sorry I cannot attend you this evening, but the noise and heat of a public room I dare not encounter.”

“By no means! it would be insupportable; we will sit together: I will lay an embargo on my tongue, and though you may think it ungovernable, I’ll engage that it shall not disturb you.”

“Not for the world,” replied she eagerly, “if you break your engagement you will offend me inexpressibly.—Can I tell my friend without appearing

“ appearing ungrateful, that this un-
“ cial pain makes me unfit for com-
“ pany?”

“ My dear Lady Louisa,” said I,
again taking hold of her hand, “ have
“ we not long been friends? May we
“ not say with Artaxerxes,

“ In infancy, our hopes and fears,
“ Were to each other known;
“ And friendship in our riper years
“ Has twin’d our hearts in one?”

“ Then why my dear friend, this
“ cruel reserve? I too plainly see some
“ secret pain lurks in your bosom: a
“ trifling nervous head-ache did not
“ occasion the agitation in which I found
“ you. Why will you not repose your
“ anxiety in the breast of one who by
“ sharing it might be some means of
“ relieving it?”

“ Oh, my Fanny!” exclaimed she,
the tears gushing from her eyes—“ you
“ are too penetrating! the secret, how-
“ ever, which I have so long kept con-
“ cealed through an inexcusable re-
“ serve: suffer me still to retain till I
can

“ can regain some degree of composure.”

“ Your time my dear is mine, I seek not your confidence to distress, but to relieve you.”

“ Promise me then,” said she, “ that you will accompany Lady Wilson this evening, and be assured I will embrace the first moment I am capable of the task, to disclose to you every sentiment of my mind.”

Lady Wilson now joined us. I soon however gave her a hint that company was irksome, and we withdrew together.

I had the most agreeable dance at Mrs. Warbleton’s assembly, that I have enjoyed of some time : my pleasure however was greatly damped by intruding reflections on my friend’s uneasiness, though I flatter myself it will soon subside.

I danced with Lord Clifton, an honour which I know not how to account for, as he never before ventured to treat me with common attention in public : something whispered me that the superior powers began to relax from their dignity : I wished to be satisfied whether there

there was any foundation for my conjectures, and was several times inclined to make the enquiry, but pride checked the question, and keeps me still in ignorance.

Lady Louisa's quondam admirer Horton, is laying siege to an old maid nearly arrived at her grand climacteric ; but as she can reckon thousands by her own date, they will suffice as good substitutes for youth and beauty. We had the good fortune to be the next couple to this laugh-exciting couple. Can a little ridicule be blameable on such an occasion. The tender glances of the enamoured swain. The modest timidity and frequent blushes which the convenient fan hid the want of, with the languishing softness of the antique fair one, were sufficient to provoke a distortion of the contracted muscles even of a Roman senator.

The eldest Miss Horton, whose amiable character you have heard from Lady Louisa Stafford, is gone to Lisbon accompanied by her mother : the poor girl, goes for the benefit of her health :
the

the faculty fearing a tendency to a consumption in her constitution; but I sincerely hope such salutary methods being used in time, may be a means of preserving so valuable a life, and that the pangs Mrs. Horton suffers for the ill conduct of her son, may be repaid in the welfare and happiness of her charming daughters.

The morning was far advanced before we came home, and I could not hear of Lady Louisa, as her woman as well as herself had been long retired to rest: you will scarcely believe me, when I say this long epistle has been written between two and four in the morning. I am so inured to raking, that I believe I shall soon learn to live without sleep: it has not yet attacked my health or spirits, though I am heartily tired of this continual succession of it, and we are to follow the same track till the middle of June. I find great difficulty in regulating my finances; the time I have spent here, has taught me more true œconomy than an age soberly passed in the country could have done—I divide
my

my income into three allotments: the principal is devoted to my own expences in common: the second to the use of those who enjoy less of this world's advantages than myself, and the third is a little sum saved for the purpose of indulging myself in any extra-extravagancies.

They laugh at me for doing my own millinery, and scoff at my washed gauzes—I retort the laugh—tell them 'tis all envy—that I may wear any thing—till they silence me at once by denouncing against me the dreadful sentence of virginity in reward for my exactness.

What trumpery nonsense have I written: I should be ashamed to retrace the steps of my foolish pen, if my sleepy eyes would permit the task: therefore adieu at once, *bon repos ma chere amie—Croyez moi tout a vous.*

FANNY CLIFTON.

LET-

LETTER LXXIX.

MR. FITZHENRY TO LORD WESTVILLE.

YOU was a witness to the effects of the Countess of Belmont's unexpected letter: conceive then the sensations which accompanied me hither, for a description of them, is not within the power of words.

I arrived late last night and found my old lodgings disengaged, which was a fortunate circumstance, as my mind was not suited to the hurry of an hotel.

I sent about two hours ago into Grosvenor-square, and in return received a most polite invitation, which I have ever since been preparing to accept; but you, who are perfectly acquainted with the passion of love can account for the fears, the apprehensions, and various emotions, which in opposition to my most ardent wishes, keep me from the idol of my soul.

The chariot waits, and three times have I opened the door, shut it again
and

and returned.—I said I would not write till the interview so important to my peace was over; but in my present agitation (paper and a standish lying invitingly by my side) scribbling was my only refuge: I will not however squander thus any more of these precious moments; but fly to receive my sentence.

Surely I may indulge a ray of hope!—I have read and revered the Countess's letter—could it be written without the consent of her angelic daughter? there is ecstasy in the thought that it was not, and I will at least for the moment cherish it.

Farewell! within the narrow compass of the present hour, is contained the future happiness or misery of your friend,

FRANCIS FITZHENRY.

LETTER LXXX.

MISS CLIFTON TO MISS PARKER.

THANKS to the stars! thanks to the little blind deity! and double thanks to that angel incarnate Lady Belmont:

mont: the sun-shine of happiness breathes on my lovely friend; and the little transient cloud that hung over her is entirely dispersed by—but hift, and you shall hear all in its due course.

Four days from the date of my last, her ladyship continued nearly in the state I described, only with this difference, she quitted her apartment, and even accompanied us into public; but her exertions were ineffectual to the recovery of her peace. She sighed frequently and seized every opportunity to retire, as the greatest comfort she could enjoy.—Me, she particularly avoided, and if we were accidentally left together, her embarrassment was evidently encreased. I sincerely repented the request I had made, as instead of answering my wishes, it seemed to give a keener edge to her pain.

Four days were thus passed, when, on the morning of the fifth, as her ladyship and myself were sitting in the breakfast parlour, (Lady Wilson who is generally late, not being arrived) a card was delivered from Fitzhenry, with compli-

ments and enquiries, signifying an intention of waiting upon us that morning. Lady Louisa's surprize was unaffected, her tremor was excessive, and her countenance emulated the lilly and the rose alternately.—“ My dearest friend,” cried I, “ endeavour to compose yourself; I am no stranger to the feelings of your heart in regard to Mr. Fitzhenry; therefore let me entreat you to abjure this unkind reserve.”

“ Ah! my Fanny!” said she throwing herself upon a chair, “ you know not the intricacy of my situation.—After this letter, presenting me that she had received from him: what can be the meaning of this visit? Can he mean to insult me?”

“ Insult you my dear—No! I'll answer for his veneration and respect: nor could any one but a woman in love have formed such a supposition; the letter you have received is a proof of a noble mind—as to his visit, let that speak for itself, I have not a doubt that the actions of Mr. Fitzhenry

“ Henry will constantly accord with the character his merit has acquired.”

“ Well!” said she, starting from a reverie, “ I believe”—She was interrupted by the entrance of Lady Wilson, who rejoiced at the return of her favourite, and answered his card immediately.

About two, the expected guest appeared; ’twas with difficulty I persuaded my friend to be present, and her countenance spoke her emotions upon the rencontre, nor did the gentleman appear more composed: I wished an explanation to take place, to put an end to their mutual perturbations, and was racking my invention for a plausible excuse to carry away Lady Wilson; when a good natured mantua-maker arrived, and saved me any further trouble on that score.

I did not suffer myself to remain long in so obtrusive a situation; but crying—Oh dear! I must speak to *Madame la Rue* about the trimming of my *boue de Paris*, ran up stairs *vitement*, leaving Lady Louisa I dare say for the moment most horridly chagrined at my flight;

however, I thought I had left with her an admirable peace maker, and so it proved; for, though when we met again she blushed, it was not a blush of displeasure, but such an one as I suppose every modest damsel wears upon a declaration of love from the man of her heart.

After his departure we had a long *tête-à-tête*: she acquainted me with all the fluctuating emotions she had suffered; how friendship had decoyed her into love, and what misery she had endured upon the receipt of that letter, which now augments her happiness, as it is an incontestible proof of the writers disinterested affection. She likewise informed me, that her inestimable parent was the true source of the bright prospects that awaited her—that Mr. Fitzhenry brought with him a letter from her, wherein she offers him the hand of her daughter, provided he can obtain her approbation and her father's. The first, he is in secure possession of, and the last I trust will not prove an irremediable obstacle.

Lady

This I write per permission, all disguise is thrown aside, and I cannot even exult in the honour of being trusted with a secret.

Lady L. apologized for her past reserve, but accused me of being equally culpable. I pleaded not guilty to the charge, and offered many weighty and cogent arguments in my own vindication, amongst which were the following—that whilst her passion was the production of sentiment and esteem, and authorised by merit, she had reason to cherish and glory in the flame. Mine, on the contrary, was rendered criminal by the baseness of its object, and those sentiments which gave encouragement to her attachment, forbade the existence of mine. Silence became necessary to my peace, and therefore I was certain she could not wish the violation of it. Upon which she forgave me and applauded my prudence, hoping it had proved effectual.

“Oh! certainly,” exclaimed I—“have I any of the marks about me—do I

“ look as if the little God had made
 “ any great innovations of my peace?”

“ Oh your servant, Madam! I shall
 “ not be more explicit than yourself—
 “ Whatever may be my conjectures
 “ they shall be confined to my own
 “ breast”—so ended our conversation.

“ Oh! heavens! I fear her ladyship,
 “ now she is in the secret herself, will
 “ be too arch for me. What must I
 “ do”—“ set a thief to catch a thief”
 —you know—kind chance direct me!

In the evening we went to the opera,
 attended by deary you may be sure—
 how pretty is the cooing of these turtle
 doves—lord! lord! how I should hate
 to be so shackled!—’tis ten times worse
 than matrimony itself—How preferable
 is the life of a flirt—so *degagée*! so *jantée*,
 so *debonnair*!—Then so much followed,
 with the pleasure of hearing so many
 civil things, and the dear privilege of
 returning them with as many rude ones.
 All the beaux are her slaves: she reigns
 absolute: no one dare dispute her do-
 minion—What can be an equivalent for
 liberty and her attendant charms?—You
 will

will begin to think it is time to curtail the liberty I give to my babbling quill—but you must not be faucy:—for every moment in this region of pleasure is precious, though I know not a more agreeable method of employing them than in this intercourse with you.

Write soon; for in the way of debtor and creditor I may demand three letters before you again see the name of

FRANCES CLIFTON.

A letter from Mr. Fitzhenry to the Earl of Westville, is not inserted, as it contains merely a repetition of part of the foregoing. His lordship's answer is likewise omitted, as being unnecessary to the continuation of the narrative.

LETTER LXXXI.

MISS PARKER TO MISS CLIFTON.

WARMLY do I rejoice with you, my dear friend, in the happiness of our truly amiable Lady Louisa Stafford: my sincerest congratulations

lations and best wishes for its continuance are her's. How few are the parents, who like Lady Belmont, can turn their eyes from the false glare of rank and splendor, to the true and steady lustre of merit, in their choice of an union for their successors.

You will be surprized to hear that I have a remittance to make you of twenty pounds. Grace Foster, the poor widow whom you relieved from the utmost distress, by the advancement of that sum, called upon me this morning to repay it, to which she is enabled by a legacy of fifteen pounds.

The honest creature apologized for the trouble she gave me, but said she durst not keep the money till your return, lest some mishap might tempt her to use part of what was not her own. She said your money had brought with it the blessings of Providence, for her business had increased from that time incredibly; that her profit enabled her to live very comfortably, and to put her two little girls to a day-school: besides which she had saved five pounds towards

wards her debt, when she recieved her legacy. How many are the delights of a sincere friendship! whilst the poor woman ran on in your praise, I seemed to share with you in every eulogium as if I had equally deserved it.

I will dispatch this immediately, nor wait till I can exchange your cash for a bill, as you accuse me of idleness, but write again in a day or two and enclose it.

Time has at length produced me a comfortable establishment. The Bishop of — and his amiable consort, have through the kind offices of my worthy friend, the Reverend Mr. L—, agreed to admit me into their family in the capacity of governess to their three daughters; and on this day month I am to enter upon my new employment. Could imagination have painted a situation so desirable? Even your mistaken kindness (pardon the term) must be satisfied. You will no longer regard me as the child of adversity. So far from being obnoxious to the smiles of fortune,

you must confess with me, that I am become its peculiar favourite.

I have not seen Sir Edward and Lady Beville since the mortifying visit of which I informed you.—Mr. B. frequently raps at the door to enquire after my health; but we have only met once which was accidentally, in a walk with the two Miss Smiths. His appearance was so much altered, that when I first saw him I thought he had been ill, but his answer to the common compliment of “How do you do” did not express any indisposition: yet his spirits seemed so much depressed, and his manner coincided so exactly with his looks, that I could not divest myself of an apprehension that his health was not in a perfect state. The anxiety I feel on his account alarms me: yet what is there in such a concern, more than friendship demands.

I confess I dare not commit my sentiments to a too severe scrutiny on this subject.—I shall not deserve happiness if I suffer so presumptuous a passion to intrude upon my peace.

With

With most respectful love and compliments to Lady Louisa, and Lady Wilson: believe me ever yours,

MARIA PARKER.

LETTER LXXXII.

MISS CLIFTON TO MISS PARKER.

I SNATCH three minutes to prevent the execution of your commission: instead of remitting the twenty pounds to me, be so good as to divide it between the two infants. I never intended to be repaid, though I wished the poor woman to believe the contrary, as I thought it might prove a stimulative to her industry, and some malicious people accused her to me of idleness.—It is a horrid reflection on human nature that it is ever most prone to depress the fallen. I guess however, that poor Grace knows her enemies, or she would have taken the money to my aunts: but it was from that nest of gossips which she encourages that I received my intelligence: I now rejoice that I was not influenced by
16 their

their malignity : I knew the distress in which, by the death and insolvency of her husband, (who was a wheelwright) the poor creature was involved, and had various reasons for doubting their authority.

Can my Maria enjoy any satisfaction in which her Fanny will not share ?—I do indeed rejoice as you will be dependent, that your prospect is as bright as that state will admit of : we are at present in such a state of hurry and confusion that I have not time to express my sentiments upon this, or any other subject.

We are to have a magnificent concert here to-day : it may almost be called a festival of music : huge preparations have been making these three days, nor are they yet concluded. Partitions are removed, and orchestras erected in the room of bedsteads. To be sure the concert room is fitted up with the most superb elegance, which will, no doubt, be attended with a proportionate expence. My head is almost distracted with the rout that is made about it ;
whilst

whilst Lady Wilson, who is called upon every moment to give fresh orders, is perfectly composed: but I find it is an annual custom, and she is pretty well experienced in the trouble, as well as the pleasures which attend it.

To-morrow is to be an idle day with us all, and I intend to transmit you a whole account of our gala: in the meantime—*je suis la votre.*

F. CLIFTON.

LETTER LXXXIII.

FROM THE SAME TO THE SAME.

GOOD Heavens! What an adventure! I can scarce so far collect my bewildered ideas as to be convinced I am awake; if I am, I was about an hour and a half ago seated in Lady Wilson's little library with a volume of Thompson's seasons in my hand, when the door was thrown open, and in rushed the wildest figure I ever beheld, ycleped Lord Clifton.—I felt an emotion of fear, as well as surprise, at his extraordinary appearance

appearance; but before I could utter a syllable he was upon his knees, crying, —Oh! my dearest Fanny!—let me call “you so; and forgive and pity my distraction. This very moment am I to “be banished from your presence, perhaps for ever:—unless”—he paused, —but my astonishment suffered me not to take advantage of his silence—“In “short” resumed he, “my fate is at a “crisis, and I must instantly either become the most miserable, or most supremely blest of mankind. My father and mother have discovered that “attachment which I have not dared to “breathe even to yourself; and their “rage is beyond description; but I disregard their violence:—let them “storm: I abjure that detestable pride “which has alienated the worthiest part “of their family from their affection— “Let me repair their injustice—Oh suffer me to place the brightest ornament of the name of Clifton in its “proper sphere—Fly with me my dearest friend—we will defy their unnatural persecution.”

What

“What Sir!” said I, not a little chagrined at this address, “and have
“you pretended to honour with your
“friendship, one, of whom you entertain
“so despicable an opinion?—Could
“you conceive that those admonitions
“which were given with the charitable
“purpose of drawing you from those
“scenes of vice in which you were involved,
“and to render you a comfort
“to your parents, were meant to ensnare,
“to entrap, and to seduce you
“from your obedience to them? Am I
“not already the object of their abhorrence?
“Why would you wish me to become
“deservedly obnoxious to them? You know
“me not, if you think me capable of entering
“into a clandestine engagement: and I must
“further add,” continued I, “that although,
“ever since my first meeting with Lord Clifton,
“I have esteemed him as a friend—Nay!
“even as a brother—neither situation
“nor circumstance could have empowered
“me to make any other return for
“his partiality.”

I was

I was then preparing to quit the room, when he rapturously seized my hand, and swore tremendously that I should not leave him.—At that moment he started at the sound of a well known voice, which in a loud key cried, “where “ is this ungrateful boy,” immediately accompanied by the appearance of Lord and Lady Carleton, followed by Lady Louisa and Lady Wilson; I confess the strangeness of my situation threw me into a momentary perplexity, but a clear conscience soon reassured me, and making a slight obeisance I withdrew.

Lady Louisa flew to me upon their departure and related the sequel of the farce. They loaded my poor cuz with invective, of which their civility to my friends could scarcely restrain them from favouring me with a share. They accused their son of deceiving them by pretending he was under an engagement with Lady Louisa Stafford: he retorted upon them by alledging that his duplicity was the offspring of their unnatural pride: that they had no occasion to be under any apprehensions, for by G——
their

their family would never be possessed of so bright a gem: for I scorned their alliance as much as they could mine. This was all the contrition they could possibly extort from him: a circumstance which truly concerned me. The treatment he receives is calculated to ruin him: I am convinced his temper with gentleness might be led to any thing, but I fear the method they adopt will have a very contrary effect.

This curious anecdote will not cancel my engagement, or excuse a breach of promise. A word or two of the concert you have a right to demand, yet these things are all so much alike, that I fear I can find little to say worth your acceptance.

The company assembled about half after nine. The orchestra was filled with the first performers vocal and instrumental, and the music selected with the greatest taste, chiefly from the inimitable productions of Handel. About twelve this entertainment ended, and was succeeded by a magnificent supper, which was followed by a ball. The whole

whole ended not till four in the morning. I danced with a young Captain of the Guards: a charming fellow, but insufferably vain: he had the *hardiesse* to aspire to the honour of Lady Louisa's hand, and met with the rejection he might reasonably expect; he is frequently of our parties: I do not know whether I have mentioned him before, if I have, you must pardon me for troubling you twice with so mere a *bagatelle*, but I find a dearth of subject, and am obliged to have recourse to trifles to fulfil my contract: no incidents occurred worth relating, or *bon mots* worthy a repetition: wit I fear is deceased, and good sense mourning the loss of her sprightly child, seldom stirs abroad.

The grand nuptials of Horton and the old damsel are over: and as this letter begins in the style of a novel, it shall end as they all do, with a wedding; therefore adieu.

FRANCES CLIFTON.

LET

LETTER LXXXIV.

MISS PARKER TO MISS CLIFTON.

HOW unfearchable are the decrees of Providence! How different are my prefent prospects to thofe in which I fo lately exulted.—My brother is returned—that event for which I fo ardently wifhed is arrived, but with fuch attendant circumftances as forbid me to rejoice: he left Bengal without receiving my remittance: he would not have been fuffered to depart, had not a worthy friend who failed in the fame fhip paid his debts, and accepted his bond for the repayment upon his arrival in England.

He is now in London, deftitute of any fupport, but what he derives from the benevolent hand of friendship: and I have too much reafon to apprehend, in the laft ftage of a confumption. From his own letter you may form the trueft idea of the poor fellow's fufferings. I
have

have taken a copy of it for your perusal, and to that I must refer you.

Tears have almost blinded me, and I can say no more than that I am, and ever shall remain whilst I have life, your most grateful and firmly attached

MARIA PARKER.

LETTER LXXXV.

MR. PARKER TO MISS PARKER.

LONDON.

AMIDST the complicated horrors which attended that situation I before described—amidst the persecutions of creditors, the terrors of a jail, sinking beneath disease, aggravated by these evils, and encreased by the malignant heat of the climate: heaven in its infinite mercy afforded me an unexpected and almost miraculous relief, through the kindness of a young man, between whom and myself there has ever existed the most firm attachment, and whom in more prosperous days I have had the happiness of serving: he is an Englishman

man as well as myself, and employed in the service of the East India Company. Fortunately for me he was at that critical juncture entrusted with dispatches of great importance, together with considerable remittances in specie to his native country: his generous heart had long commiserated my sufferings, and yearned to serve me, nor could he let this opportunity escape whatsoever dangers might attend his humanity, without yielding to its propensities. He called upon me one morning—"my dear friend," said he, "I am going to England!—I cannot bear the idea of leaving you behind a prey to all the horrors of distress, and I know your principles too well to suppose you capable of defrauding your creditors by a stolen flight.—If a friend," continued he, "would advance you the sum you have occasion for, could you be answerable for the repayment of it immediately upon your arrival in England?"—"Yes," returned I, with a sigh, "I have one resource, a secure one, in which, to the most ex-

"cruciating

“cruciating torture of my mind I am
“compelled to apply. I must rob the
“most amiable of women to supply my
“own necessities; with this only con-
“solation, that when delivered from my
“present constraint; if my native air,
“with the blessing of providence, re-
“stores my health and strength, I am
“capable of many different employ-
“ments, and the most laborious would
“be rendered delightful, by enabling me
“to restore to a beloved sister a comfort-
“able competency of which my calami-
“ties must deprive her.”—“Well,” said
he, “notwithstanding the importance
“of my trust, I must obey the calls of
“friendship.”

Then relating to me the nature of his
embassy, “you see,” said he, “I rest
“my honour and integrity upon your’s:
“more than my life I entrust to your
“fidelity.—I will at all events release
“you from the difficulties that surround
“you, upon the receipt of your bond
“for the repayment, within a fortnight
“of our arrival in England.”

Any

Any attempt to give you an idea of my ecstacy ! my gratitude upon this un-
hoped for deliverance would be fruitless.
Suffice it to say, that after having paid
on my account five hundred and seventy-
six pounds we embarked, and our voyage
was attended with no adverse circum-
stances, except that my health, which I
flattered myself would receive benefit
from the sea, seemed so rapidly to de-
cline, that I fear all the salutary effects
of my native air will prove inadequate
to restoring it to its former state. My
debt was encreased by my expences
on ship board sixty-three pounds: my
health rendering that frugality impossi-
ble which I wished to adopt: indeed my
present support is derived from the same
source, which reduces me to the dis-
agreeable necessity of urging you to re-
mit me a speedy order for the sums I
have mentioned, with a trifling addition
for what I must expend here, and upon
my journey to Exeter, which I shall
commence the moment I have discharged
my obligations to my friend: and that I
may live to return those I owe to the
most

most affectionate of sisters, is the earnest prayer of her truly grateful and unfortunate brother,

HENRY PARKER.

LETTER LXXXVI.

* LADY LOUISA STAFFORD TO THE COUNTESS OF BELMONT.

NO answer is yet arrived from my father: you, dear madam, no more than myself can wonder at this delay: a contrary conduct must indeed have surprized us: but poor Mr. Fitzhenry who expected a reply by the return of the mail, either does, or pretends to suffer much from his disappointment: I say he may pretend, for although I entertain an high opinion of his sincerity, I take it for granted, that all lovers say more than they feel, and wish to make our poor credulous sex believe in miracles which never existed: he calls me cruel because I smile at his impatience,

* Many letters in this correspondence are omitted, not being necessary to the narrative.

and

and declares that it is impossible I can love as he does, without suffering the same apprehensions and alarms. By the bye I am acquainted with a secret, of which he is not yet allowed to partake: he knows not how far the kindness of one parent makes up for the want of paternal tenderness in the other: he is unacquainted with the kind assurances, you have made me, that I shall not be sacrificed to the caprice of one, who has never interested himself in my happiness.

The idea of acting contrary to the will of a father, in the principal event of life, in the general sense is dreadful; but my situation I think is attended with such circumstances, as must exculpate me from the crime of disobedience.

Would you believe madam, that Lord Davenant (I mean Westville) is the intimate and bosom friend of Mr. Fitzhenry, could you have imagined so unequal a connexion? Yet he gives him the most exalted character: says he is possessed of an enlarged heart, and most benevolent sentiments: his principles, though unfortunately vitiated in his youth

by unlimited indulgences and licentious company, were originally good: and that he could now with the utmost joy declare that those seeds of vice so early sown in his mind, were by the virtue and prudence of my friend, for whom I find he still entertains the most sincere and fervent attachment, together with some subsequent afflictions totally eradicated, and that he did not believe, that there now existed a more conscientious worthy man; a change in which he most sincerely rejoiced: but that melancholy depression of spirits which had taken place of his natural vivacity, deeply concerned him; and that he had with the utmost assiduity at last prevailed upon him, to come and share in the dissipation of the town. “I thought,” said he, “as absence had failed, accustoming
“himself to the presence of Miss Dudley, as an indifferent person, might be
“more effectual, at least it was the only
“expedient left untried, and desperate
“diseases justify dangerous remedies.”

Last night a party was proposed for Ranelagh; Mr. Fitzhenry spoke to me
a-part,

a-part, and enquired if the sudden appearance of his friend would not be distressing to Miss Clifton, as he knew his intention was to be there—"Not in the least," replied I, "I doubt not but Miss Clifton will see his lordship with the same composure, with which she meets any other indifferent person."

Entre nous, I advanced rather further than my judgment warranted, but I knew it was the opinion she wished to be established in the minds of all.

I dropped no hint to Fanny of the rencontre I expected, and Mr. Fitzhenry informed me that his friend was equally ignorant of our intentions: I own there was a degree of cruelty in our secrecy—I was spreading a net to betray my friend—but curiosity holds absolute dominion over the female mind, and the little gipsy deserved a trifling punishment for her reserve.

We had been in the room some time before his lordship arrived, but as I was upon the watch, I believe he had not long been there before I distinguished his graceful figure; he was in deep mourn-

ing, which together with a languor which overspread his countenance, added new charms to a face, which before was certainly the handsomest I ever saw. Fanny caught not a view of him till they happened to pass near each other. She was talking away in high spirits, being always the life of the party—when starting suddenly as from an electrical shock, she seized my arm, trembled violently, and her face instantly overspread with the deepest crimson: the glance was mutual, and attended with nearly the same effect upon both parties, only that his lordship's baffled all concealment—he immediately applied a handkerchief to his eyes, and without speaking to the friend on whose arm he leaned, turned hastily into a different part of the room.

Fanny recovered her spirits better than I expected: but they were so *mal adroit*, and unlike that genuine flow of good humour, which distinguishes her from every other modern beauty, that I was surprized they passed current: indeed the whole occurrence fortunately escaped the notice of any one, except Mr. Fitz-henry

henry and myself.—The beaux would have been in despair: Miss Clifton being certainly the object dearest to them all except their sweet-selves.

Mr. Fitzhenry followed his friend, and neither of them appeared again till the latter end of the evening: the deepest melancholy was still observable in the countenance of the latter, and his presence, notwithstanding every precaution to disguise her feelings, was perceptibly irksome to Miss Clifton.

The Pantheon closes next week with a grand masquerade: Fanny is delighted with the idea, and I think in the course of the last week, has fixed upon at least twenty dresses, which have been in succession discarded; she still remains undetermined, and will, I'll venture to say, till the day arrives.

I own curiosity will not suffer my retrograde wishes to be entirely idle on this occasion, but the slightest mark of disapprobation from your pen will be submitted to without reluctance, for believe me, nothing can be enjoyed which gives any degree of pain or displeasure to

so kind and indulgent a parent, by her grateful daughter,

LOUISA STAFFORD.

LETTER LXXXVII.

MISS CLIFTON TO MISS PARKER.

INDEED Maria, I am at a loss for words—your troubles affect me sensibly.—My spirits sink under them—I cannot live in this state of dissipation, whilst my friend droops under the stings of adversity, from which my presence might in some degree relieve her. On Friday I mean to be in Exeter. Think not that I make any sacrifice in quitting my present situation: my friends are all that I prize in this metropolis: its charms are lost, novelty no longer ornaments the scene, and to entrust you with a secret of which I wish I was not myself conscious; the sudden appearance of Lord Westville has rendered it truly disagreeable. I go no where without apprehension, yet I dare not seclude myself from society

society from the fear of impertinent conjectures.

Fitzhenry I find is his lordship's most intimate friend, which imposes upon me a painful reserve to Lady Louisa: but to my Maria, my heart with all its weaknesses may be displayed; we will transfer our griefs to the bosom of each other, and who knows but we may waste them in the exchange.

FANNY CLIFTON.

LETTER LXXXVIII.

MISS PARKER TO MISS CLIFTON.

WHAT can I say in return for such repeated instances of friendship: the best words would give a faint representation of my feelings, and I am unfortunate enough to want expressions, in proportion as I abound in gratitude.

Think not I will further oppress myself by suffering you to become a sharer in my misfortunes: that indeed would be involving myself in real distress, in comparison of which every other is tri-

vial. Pain me not I entreat you by quitting Lady Wilson a moment earlier on my account, your kind intentions would not avail; my resolution, or obstinacy (call it which you will) is insurmountable—indeed I have no wants to urge the violation of it: I have money to supply my present exigencies, and when it is exhausted I can work for more.—My brother's ill state of health requires my present attendance, but thank heaven he is not so ill, as my fears had taught me to expect, and I trust that his native air, with a tranquil mind, will restore him to my prayers: he has taken such measures as will, I hope, secure the money I remitted to Lisbon. It was some time before I could prevail upon myself to inform him of that unfortunate circumstance, 'tis lucky however, that I conquered my reluctance, as his friend returns in the first ship that sails eastward, and will joyfully transact the business. He came down with my brother, and is still in Exeter: his manner corresponds with the idea I had entertained from his benevolence, and his honour and integrity

grity display themselves in every instance; even till they descend to a tiresome minutiae. I am very awkwardly situated in respect to him. Henry entertaining an undeserved partiality for his sister, thought that an union with her would amply recompence the kindness of his friend, and actually had fixed upon that mode to cancel his obligations; not suspecting a possibility of my declining so advantageous an alliance. The poor man by this means has (unfortunately for himself) been persuaded into a passion for me:—I cannot look upon the attachment he professes in any other light, for I dare say the greatest part of his voyage was passed in listening to my praises, and I suppose he came here pre-determined to approve the object of them. My brother's importunities are extremely irksome, and was I unacquainted with the real motive of them, I should even accuse him of cruelty.

Far be it from me to over-rate my poor services: but I cannot help thinking after what I have already suffered, I ought to

be exempt from this voluntary perfection.

My expected nuptials engross the attention of the whole town: my kind friends have already taken upon themselves the trouble of chusing my apparel, making my settlements, and for ought I know, of bespeaking me a passage to Bengal. Nay! I have heard such strange accounts of myself, that I can scarcely aver that I am at this moment writing to you upon *terra firma*. I am tormented from all quarters: my spirits sink more under these trivial vexations, which good sense would despise, than they did under the real evils I have encountered.

To add to my chagrin, Mr. Beville will not speak to me; I saw him yesterday, when to my great surprize, he touched his hat, and walked on. What can I have done to forfeit so good a friend!—I cannot think him infected with caprice, and am almost ready to condemn myself, though I know not for what.

Again I conjure you not to leave London, such a proceeding would encrease

crease my uneasiness: except the indisposition of my poor brother, I have no troubles but such as are calculated to divert you and excite your raillery, and even those will cease with the departure of the East Indian.

You say you dare not seclude yourself from society from the fear of impertinent conjectures: your removal at this juncture would afford much better subject for the speculation of impertinence. Your coming (I once more repeat) would give me a regret, which if you could form any idea of, I am certain your kindness would spare me,

MARIA PARKER.

LETTER LXXXIX.

MISS CLIFTON TO MISS PARKER.

WHAT a girl you are!—how you overturn all my schemes and purposes:—but for your obstinacy (can you think it deserves a better name?) I should not have soiled this piece of paper, but have had the superior pleasure

K

of

of being advanced some miles on my road to E——.

What a commanding style the chit writes in! I have a great mind to disobey:—but you talk so much of uneasiness and regret, that I have not courage to rebel, and I fear must at last tamely submit to your despotic sway.

I see the whole character of your new adorer at one *coup d'oeil*;—I know the very cut of his coat, and can discover the multiplication table in every line of his countenance, with cent per cent written upon his forehead, which causes a contraction of the eye-brows—I'll hold a wager if he lends you, or borrows of you a penny, he items it in his tablets.—Tell me now honestly, is not this the man?—No you won't—I see you won't by that air of gravity—“He is my brother's friend, and it would not be right.”—True—and you never act wrong—Yet Maria, you have rejected my friendship, and I will not suffer that circumstance to be marked in your list of virtues.

On

On second thoughts I believe I must advise you to accept the proposal of your new friend, for I, who with a little glass can take a peep into futurity, see him encircled with diamonds, gold dust, camels laden with treasure, vassals attending his nod, and every insignia of a wealthy nabob.

Jesting apart—since I wrote last I have been the veriest mope alive—and what now makes me prattle, is the very thing that gives you the most uneasiness—Poor Beville—Alas! jealousy is a tormenting fiend! yet I am malicious enough to rejoice in your pain, good Sir.—Well! although I have seen this flame kindling from its earliest infancy, I did not imagine its growth had been so rapid—I sincerely wish you joy; but you are too prudish to own you rejoice in the discovery, and ten to one will not have the grace to thank me for the good news.—Positively Maria I foresee better prospects—merit is sure of a reward sooner or later.

I have done the foolishhest trick!—the boldest trick!—and withal a roguish trick—

trick—A trick for which, by the laws of the land, I believe I might be transported.—How would you like to see your poor friend shipped off, amongst a tribe of malefactors to the coast of Africa?—Oh! Lord there is no jesting with a rope about one's neck—so here follows the sincere and penitential (though not I hope the last dying) speech and confession of Frances Clifton, spinster.

Yes, my friend, I have violated those principles of honesty in which I was educated, and have committed a theft—With sorrow and contrition I confess, that I have feloniously and with force and violence, (though not against his will) carried away the body of a favourite lap-dog.

You remember how fond I was of little Felix, and how you used to pester me with the old saw, “love me, love my dog;” but you see it as insignificant as all other old proverbs, for my love for the animal still remains, though I despise his master: it has betrayed me into a very wrong action, which like all

other illicit proceedings, brings with it its own punishment.

Paying a milliners bill preparatory to my intended removal, Lord Westville passed the shop followed by Felix; the dear little creature recognised his old friend, ran into the shop, and was in my arms in an instant: our caresses were mutual, and continued till it was too late to overtake his master. I told the milliner that I knew to whom he belonged, and would take him home with me, in order to restore him to the right owner; this was the first falsehood, that this new occupation imposed upon me: I was obliged to manufacture half a dozen more in the chair to deceive their two ladyships—and very necessary they were—thus I introduced my booty.

“ See what a beautiful little dog I’ve purchased.”

“ Oh the pretty creature!”

“ Where did you meet with it?”

“ What did you give for it?”

“ Oh you must excuse me there: you

“ shan’t accuse me of having more

“ money than wit.”

Lady

Lady Louisa startled me by saying, " 'tis strange its so fond of you already ; " it does not appear like a new acquaintance."

I did not recollect at first that Lady Wilson might probably know the dog as well as myself; but in that instance fortune befriended me, for I believe she totally forgets having seen one of any kind with his lordship. I am most afraid of Fitzhenry, and on his account keep it close in my own room; so that the poor thing has left good quarters to be my prisoner. If I had not thought myself on the wing for the country, I should not have been guilty of the theft: but now he is mine, I am determined not to resign him if I can possibly avoid it. Suppose he is advertised! what a pretty figure I shall cut, after the fibs and evasions to which I have been reduced. I am so thoroughly conscious of the many improprieties attending this mad action, that I condemn myself every moment, and wish with all my heart that I had not seen the dog, or that I had possessed a grain or two of prudence.

To-morrow I go to a masquerade, for the first time in my life—I did think of it

it with great pleasure, but latterly I have been above half inclined not to go: however, I have at last after much wavering, fixed upon my dress, and when you read in the papers, the *bon mots* and witty repartees of Fanny the gipsy, attribute them to your friend. You are the only person intrusted with this important secret, besides our own family and Fitzhenry, who is to have the honour of attending us. He and deary, in compliment to me, have fixed upon the characters of Mirzan and Theodofia, who with Lady Wilson in a domino, make up our party.

I have hitherto had the good fortune to escape a second meeting with Lord Westville, and to-morrow I shall have apprehensions on his account, for in so great a crowd, and disguised likewise, his presence can't affect me.

Write soon; let me know how you go on: though you will not permit me to serve you, you cannot prevent my being interested in every thing that concerns

cerns you, and remaining most stedfastly
your sincere friend,

F. CLIFTON.

LETTER XC.

MISS PARKER TO MISS CLIFTON.

WHAT oracle should I have believed, that had foretold, Miss Clifton would demean herself by the action she has related?—Could I suppose that she herself would invest the busy babblers with a plea to sneer at her expence, and her enemies to rejoice; whilst her real friends must grieve for an imprudence, so incompatible with her good sense? What are the conclusions most natural to be drawn by people who are unacquainted with your sentiments? Will they not conjecture that you detain the dog as a private invitation to the master, to renew those addresses you have affected to despise? Can you be surprised if the envious world exults, that the time is come, when the courted, the admired, and adored Miss Clifton, is reduced

duced in her turn to make advances, and to solicit those attentions, which she had formerly rejected. Nay, you must pardon me, my dear friend, when I say that even my own opinion will coincide with theirs upon this occasion: I have not sufficient credulity to believe, that a fondness for a little insignificant lap-dog, could make a momentary innovation on your sense and prudence.—No, believe me, (however you may flatter yourself) it was a lurking partiality for the owner of it, by which you was actuated. A partiality, which as I have myself witnessed your strenuous endeavours to conquer its influence, instead of condemning I most sincerely compassionate, and fervently wish that time may be productive of such a change, as will render the object deserving of the distinction.

Your wishes to renew the addresses of Lord Westville, might possibly be excusable, from a firm conviction that he contemned his past vices, and that his morals were now become irreproachable; but in that case, I wish some better method had been adopted, than one
which

which admits an interpretation so disadvantageous and contradictory to your acknowledged characteristics, candour and sincerity.

If you think there is a freedom and warmth of expression in my language, which exceeds the bounds of propriety, attribute it to a friendship which submits neither to bounds or limits: in my opinion the very essence and existence of true friendship consists in a free and unrestrained exchange of sentiments. I am conscious that my own actions are far from being impervious to the eye of censure, and I should esteem that person to be most my friend, who endeavoured most assiduously to convince me of my errors.

I could scold you for your unmerciful raillery on a certain subject, if my spleen was not entirely exhausted; besides an invincible repugnance to dwelling upon it, on paper at least, for I must acknowledge my mind is too much infected by it.

Our stranger has quitted us, which would have been an effectual restorative
to

to my peace, if my brother's health did not suffer by his departure. It was a separation, which seemed to be equally regretted by both parties; but poor Henry, whose spirits have been long a prey to his disorder, could not support the acuteness of his feelings; in consequence of which, he has suffered a relapse: he mourns incessantly the loss of his friend, and now and then reproaches me for my refusal of him, which grieves without offending me. 'Tis a consciousness that I have done, whatever duty and affection could demand, that supports me—Notwithstanding which my spirits begin to droop.—Is it not enough to see the last remaining branch of my family sinking into the grave—to be upon the brink of losing a much loved brother, and of beholding myself a friendless outcast in the world, without the consciousness of adding pain to his disease, and embittering perhaps his latest moments?—yet how could I have acted otherwise?—Mr. L— is possessed of worth and generosity, and has nobly earned my friendship—yet I must own he too nearly resembles
the

the outlines of your portrait, ever to have been the object of my choice, had my heart been free and disengaged. Would it not then have been the height of impiety, as well as folly, to have forsworn myself at the altar, and to have bartered my peace of mind, for the unequivocal possession of perishable wealth.

Pray oblige me by relinquishing the caresses of little Felix—by restoring him to his master you will retrieve the approbation of your own judgment, and at the same time relieve from no inconsiderable concern, the feelings of your sincere friend,

MARIA PARKER.

LETTER XCI.

MISS CLIFTON TO MISS PARKER.

MY curiosity is satisfied:—the masquerade is over, and I have, thank Heaven! escaped the perils that attended it, though my spirits are still in such a state

state of agitation, that I can scarcely relate to you what they were.

The first sight of the motley crowd, with the noise of bell-men, watchmen's rattles; ballad-fingers, &c. struck me with a degree of terror and confusion, from which I was scarcely recovered, when folly accosted me to know his fortune: I however, with the help of crossing my hand, and other magical gestures replied,

Alas! 'tis done!—I see the fates decree,
Poverty and contempt must wait on thee.

He turned his hobby-horse, and with a whistle left me—I then espying Sir Harry and Lady Sycamore (the latter of which I took for Mrs. Crofts) began my occupation of begging, when a pleasant fellow in the dress of Ralph the miller's son, tapped my shoulder, crying, oh, oh, mistress have I caught you! He attended me closely, claiming a privilege from his character; I enquired of Fitzhenry if he knew him, who answered in the affirmative, and said he was an intimate friend of his, whom he should be

be happy to introduce to me in his own character some future opportunity ; but was bound in honour, in compliance with some private reasons, not to discover his name at present. This account encouraged me to treat my new acquaintance with more freedom, in which I consulted my own gratification, for I never knew wit, good sense, and true politeness (which displayed itself even through the dust of the mill) so agreeably blended in the same person. If I could ever again be inspired with the tender passion, I do believe this incognito would be the man : 'tis well perhaps that I did not see his face : though Cupid has not a dart in his quiver, capable of inflicting a second wound upon the callous heart of your friend ; we danced together, and I perceived no cloy upon the pinions of time ; the moments flew with a rapidity so uncommon, that the dance was ended when I thought it was but just begun.—It had no sooner ended, than my agreeable partner taking a French leave, vanished like an apparition. Amazed at his sudden elopement, my eyes were in
an

an inquisitive position when the figure I mistook for Mrs. Crofts unfortunately passed, and a troublesome vein of raillery tempted me to pursue her, and exercise my fortune-telling talent at her expence, for which I had the better opportunity, from the slight knowledge I had of her character. I had not been long thus engaged, when recollecting my imprudence, I turned round and had the mortification to find myself entirely separated from my party: I again followed Lady Sycamore, told her my name, and requested, that as she was the only person I knew, that she would suffer me to remain with her, till I could find my party; when to my infinite astonishment I was undeceived, the person I addressed was an entire stranger to them, as well as to myself.

My distress at that moment was almost insupportable. I beheld myself friendless and alone, in the midst of a multitude. The horrors of a desert encompassed with the howling of wolves, would have been an elysium to the situation in which my own folly had involved me.

I wandered about in hopes of retrieving my lost friends, but in vain were all my endeavours. I every moment encountered some new impertinence, which added greatly to my terror, till my spirits being greatly exhausted, I sat down in an agony of despair, in the midst of which I observed, that the frightful Lady Sycamore, who had drawn me into this dilemma, followed and watched me with a vigilance I could not account for. Only figure to yourself half the horrors of my situation, and conceive my transport when I was thus accosted, as I thought, by Fitzhenry:

“ My dear Miss Clifton,” said he, “ where have you been? Your friends “ have been dreadfully alarmed at your “ absence.”

“ Where are they,” demanded I eagerly, “ lead me to them, for heaven’s “ sake—I’m sure they were not more terrified than myself.”

“ Finding their search,” replied he, “ unavailing, I have this moment procured them chairs, and promised not “ to quit this place till I found you, and “ likewise

“ likewise to attend you home myself
“ —Let us not lose time continued he,
“ in compassion to their ladyships, to
“ whom every instant will appear an
“ age till they see you.”

We passed therefore as quick as possible—charmed with the idea of being safe, and of leaving a place in which I had suffered so much anxiety, together with an implicit confidence in Mr. Fitzhenry, the improbability of their early departure upon an incident which would more naturally have detained them, never occurred to me.

In the passage a voice at some distance cried “ Stop villain, and unhand that
“ lady.”

My companion took no notice of the exclamation; but I who had not recovered my first alarm, cried “ blefs me,
“ what’s that ?”

“ Oh nothing of any consequence,” replied he, “ some dispute I suppose, “ such things happen continually at these
“ places,” hurrying me forward at the same time with increased eagerness. In short, as he was handing me into a car-

riage, a person in a Spanish habit rushed between us, and seizing the supposed Fitzhenry by the collar, cried, "Traitor unmask, or receive the reward of your villainy."

"What do you mean, fellow," said he, attempting to bluster.

"Mean miscreant," reiterated the other, "Unmask I say, or turn and defend yourself this instant:" at the same time enforcing his command by unsheathing his sword, which proved too irresistible a plea to admit of controversy. The wretch judged it most prudent to submit, and by taking off his mask discovered the vile and detestable Fitzroy.

"There!" said my still unknown champion, "now depart, and if you find yourself aggrieved, this will inform you where to find redress," presenting him a card, which he accepted with the air of a coward, and sneaked away.

The Spaniard then addressing himself to me, who was more dead than alive, said, "Madam, may I hope that the

"little

“ little service I have had the good fortune to render you, will induce you to place some confidence in me, and to entrust yourself in my protection.— Be assured, though a particular motive obliges me to keep myself unknown.”

As he uttered the last word, an accidental jostle interrupted him, and by removing his mask effectually disconcerted his plan, and threw me into a third alarm more dreadful than the former, by the appearance of Lord Westville—my terror encreased too visibly to be disregarded, which however, I believe was perfectly equalled by his lordship's confusion: he said something I suppose with a view to calm my ruffled spirits, but he was not more able to speak, than I to hear—my mind was a perfect vacuum, every mental faculty was suspended; I was involuntarily placed in a chair, and conveyed safely to Lady Wilson's, at whose door my reason first returned, and I became susceptible of a transport, of which nothing can afford an adequate idea, but a sudden enfranchisement from the jaws of death. By the light of a

lamp I again beheld Lord Westville, who bowed respectfully and withdrew.

Destined to receive another check upon my peace, an additional chastisement for my folly; upon entering the house I enquired hastily for the ladies, and conceive my astonishment, when I was informed, that they were not returned—"Good heaven's!" exclaimed I, "is there to be no end to the miseries of this horrid night!—Why did I go? by my folly!—my imprudence! my friends are at this moment miserable on my account, and suffer all those torments from which I have so recently escaped."

Lettice, who followed me into my chamber, urged and entreated me to take that rest my agitated spirits required, but my thoughts were haunted by the distress of Lady Louisa, and Lady Wilson, by a train of reproaches too keen, to suffer me to profit from her salutary advice.

The wheel of time seemed (loaded with the weight of my feelings) almost to have lost its motion. In the most
cruel

cruel and agonizing state of impatience, I passed three tedious hours, when the dreary sound of the watch was accompanied by the delightful one of those voices, I so much longed to hear. No music was ever so delightful to the ear, as our mutual salutations were to each other at that moment.

Notwithstanding it was then past six—their joy at finding me unexpectedly safe, with a general recital of difficulties and alarms, employed another hour. Their adventures not being so replete with incident as mine, and consisting chiefly in fruitless searches and enquiries for the poor lost sheep; I shall only say, that their horror upon being at last obliged to return home in a state of uncertainty, or rather indeed, with a firm conviction that some evil had befallen me, was by no means inferior to any thing I had myself endured.

The friendly Fitzhenry who returned with them, just heard of my safety, in which I am sure he sincerely rejoiced, and departed as the hour required: his kind assiduity on my account demands my

warmest gratitude, in addition to that esteem, which as a tribute to his merit, no one who knows him can withhold.

Lady Wilson whose spirits bid defiance to fatigue, fulfils an engagement to-day, which Lady Louisa and myself are compelled to break.

What a wonderful escape have I had a second time from the hands of villainy! How inscrutable are the decrees of Providence! How grateful should my heart be for its divine support. Is it not extraordinary that one enemy to my peace, should have been made an instrument in securing me from the snares of another.—Will you not call me a murmurer Maria, when I say that I wish I owed my deliverance to one, from whom I never received an insult: it is oppressive to be sensible of an obligation united with contempt and abhorrence—yet what a blessing was his timely interference—no other help was near to have rescued me from the net that was spread for me.

Mr. Fitzhenry informs me, that the diabolical Fitzroy has thought proper to seize this *convenient* opportunity to pay a visit

visit to the continent, and actually commenced his journey thither early this morning.

Write to me Maria, tell me the true state of your brother's health and your own. I hope you do not still suffer the persecutions of the East Indian—what an uniformity of mind and evenness of spirits you are possessed of! with what magnanimity you support yourself under affliction! how different from your Fanny! even a transient shock keeps its hold upon her mind, overturns the little fortitude she possesses, and deprives her of that vivacity, which is apparently ungovernable. Do not accuse me of flattery, for I am far from being disposed to flatter: I am a stupid mope; out of humour with myself and every body; yet I must say, that I have always thought you was born to be envied, and I now most sensibly feel the justice of the remark,

FANNY CLIFTON.

LETTER XCII.

FROM THE SAME TO THE SAME.

OH! my Maria! I have this moment received your letter!—and am I then so very culpable? Oh! yes!—I feel the justice of your reproaches, and am ready to acknowledge that I am self-convicted. Think not that I am offended at your warmth, 'tis the pure and genuine glow of sincere friendship which breathes through every line; every sentence is a convincing testimony, that you do not only see my errors, but feel for them, with more than a sisterly affection, and proves me doubly guilty in wounding a breast, already so heavily oppressed with affliction. Yet think not, I implore you, that it was any sinister view, which betrayed me into so flagrant a breach of prudence.—No! heaven knows with what sincerity I protest, that, at the very moment in which I committed that act of folly, by which I am degraded in my own opinion as well as in yours, had

had Lord Westville renewed those professions, of which you was a witness, they would have met with a similar reception.

Even the strict attention with which I guard my dearly purchased favourite, from the view of any but our own family, will I hope prove some evidence of my sincerity. Nay, the little innocent itself, should pay for my indiscretion with its inoffensive life, rather than I would support an idea of a discovery.—My intention (I again repeat) of leaving town immediately, by removing one difficulty, gave an unfortunate sanction to my folly:—therefore your ladyship you see was in some degree necessary, and cannot certainly refuse to assist in extricating me from the difficulties, that have arisen from my imprudence.

'Tis impossible to profit by your advice: how can I restore the dog without a discovery? which would be a certain means of giving birth to a conjecture, which is the only source of my apprehensions—a thought has just occurred to me, which if it meets with your con-

L. 6 currence,

currence, will effectually remove my fears and all danger of a detection.—I have a design even upon you—my aim is to make you an accomplice—a receiver of stolen goods—true it is, that we no sooner fall from the rule of right, than we seek to corrupt others, and seduce our friends to a level with our unworthy selves.

Notwithstanding my moralizing, something must be done, and self-interest pleads so powerfully, that unless I receive a negative to my suit by the return of post, you must prepare to welcome little Felix, who I am certain will find as kind a mistress in you as the one he leaves, with the inestimable advantage of liberty. His confinement is much wondered at, and I am laughed at for my extraordinary treatment of him.

The other day to my great mortification, one of the teizing race of morning visitors, in order I suppose, to supply matter of conversation, brought her lap-dog: it was a beautiful animal to be sure, and was of course much admired by us all, till Lady Wilson called upon
me

me to produce mine to rival its perfections; chagrined as I was, my brain was not so prolific as to afford me an excuse, and I was obliged to comply with the request, offering up a silent petition to fortune as I went, that it might be his first introduction to the good dame below.

As I was returning with the little creature in my arms, we met grimalkin upon the stairs—a lucky thought at that moment presented itself, I set down my charge, and encouraged him to bark at the poor mouse-killer, and make as much noise as he was able: the scheme took, the fray soon caused an alarm in the room I had left, and Lady Wilson opening the door, begged that I would take Felix away, for that Mrs. H. trembled for little Muff, and vowed she would not expose him to such a fury for the universe.

You see the perpetual perils that surround me!—thank my stars, Fitzhenry is often followed by a dog as big again as mine, so that to secure myself from detection on that quarter, I have only to

assume an affected air, and cry, Lord, the dear little thing would be devoured by such an enormous monster: after all, I live in continual slavery to my fears on his account.

Let your compassion for once triumph over your prudence, and grant my prayer: it will be a considerable relief to my mind, which has not recovered the shock it sustained at the masquerade: my spirits continue wonderfully depressed, nor can my utmost efforts restore them to their former serenity.

As I cannot reserve a thought from you, I acknowledge the severity, with which I have been accustomed to regard the principles of Lord Westville is greatly relaxed by a review of his conduct the other night: sufficiently so to undermine my peace, though you may credit me, when I declare my opinion is not so far reversed, as to create a wish for the renewal of addresses I never *affected* to despise—No, inferior as I am to merit like your's, I am above the meanness of dissimulation, and if you know me not, I am unacquainted with myself.

I grieve

I grieve for your brother's relapse, and for your encreased concern. I long to be with you, but Lady Wilson claims the performance of my promise, and Lady Louisa insists upon my attendance on an event, which will probably take place upon the expiration of our present visit; but if my company can afford you the slightest consolation—my dear Maria speak—every other consideration would vanish before that of giving comfort to a friend in affliction, particularly one so truly dear to her

F. CLIFTON.

Upon second thoughts I will send the dog immediately, if he is a troublesome guest, consign him over to my aunt, to whom I should have sent it without hesitation, had I been sure she would take care of him.

L E T.

LETTER XCIII.

MISS MOSTYN TO LADY LOUISA STAFFORD.

Dear and honoured madam,

EXERT your utmost fortitude to support a surprize!—a surprize equally fraught with pain and pleasure!—Prepare to receive the blessing of a returning penitent,—and ah! why must I add, dying father.

I have only time to inform you that the Earl of Belmont lies in a languishing state at the house of his steward: the fatal consequence of a duel, in which his illicit amour involved him. He cannot yet reconcile his tortured mind to the idea of an interview with his injured countess, who in emulation of divine mercy, has tendered to him the hand of forgiveness, and even sues to be admitted into his presence.—Your ladyship he wishes to see, yet dreads your appearance.

You will receive this by an express, which will not arrive many hours before myself,

myself, who by order of the countess, am to have the honour of accompanying you hither.—Her ladyship desires that you will suffer Mr. Fitzhenry to attend you: I am with the most profound respect and unbounded gratitude, your ladyship's

devoted servant,

CATHERINE MOSTYN.

LETTER XCIV.

MISS PARKER TO MISS CLIFTON.

YOUR Felix is arrived, and not the worse for his journey: the person with whom you entrusted him, did not betray the confidence you reposed in him: they seemed perfectly satisfied with each other, and parted with mutual reluctance. Could you suppose that coming from you, he could possibly prove an unwelcome guest to your Maria, even had she entertained the strongest antipathy to the canine race in general, and a greater reverse to my sentiments cannot be supposed, for you know I am fond of them
even

even to a weakness, and at this juncture this new companion is particularly valuable: I flatter myself his little playfulness will beguile me of many moments, which without him would be spent in tears.

I rejoice that you was not offended at the warmth of my last; yet I could not have imposed any restraint on my honest pen, even on pain of the heavy punishment of your displeasure: and I cannot help adding one hint more to the same purpose, you do not yet see all the dilemmas which one error has plunged you: you have not considered that Felix is better known here than he can possibly be in so extensive and populous a place as the metropolis; he has already been recognized for Lord Westville's dog. I was, however, luckily prepared for the attack by which means, without a falsehood, I have hitherto secured him from a discovery. I said, a friend had sent him to me: that I had before observed an extraordinary similitude between him and Lord Westville's Felix, and that I therefore called him by the same
same

same name—you are really obliged to me—for nothing less than screening you from the ill-nature of the world, should induce me to descend even to evasions, which are too nearly allied to downright falsehood, not to degrade any one by whom they are practised: I am even doubtful whether they are not more pernicious, they are equally the offspring of deceit, and dressed with more artifice, their effect is more certain.

I need not, I think, inform you that my brother is better, or rather that this is one of his better days, for I cannot help reflecting, that these flattering gleams have never been of long duration.

Colonel Calcot obligingly lends me his chariot to take him into the air; it is now at the door for that purpose, which obliges me to quit this employment more precipitately than I wished.—Adieu therefore my dear friend: believe that you have none more sincere than your

MARIA PARKER.

LET-

L E T T E R XCV.

LADY LOUISA STAFFORD TO MISS CLIFTON.

NOTWITHSTANDING the fatigue I have suffered both in body and mind, since I took leave of my kind friends in Grosvenor-square; I cannot seek repose till I have in some degree relieved my Fanny's friendly anxiety, by informing her that I reached Belmont Castle without any accident or inconvenience, except what proceeded from an agitated mind, and an inability to take any refreshment on the road.

Miss Mostyn's repeated assurances, that my mother's spirit, supported by her wonderful fortitude, had enabled her to encounter the shock she had so recently received, with stability and composure, had not effectually removed my apprehensions for her health, till her appearance demonstrated the truth of them: she received me with a serenity far beyond my expectations: in her eyes beamed the benignity of her soul.—She returned

turned thanks to Providence for granting to her Louisa the blessings of a father, and supplicated the divine mercy, by prolonging his life, to afford him an opportunity of atoning by the future for the misconduct of the past. I fear by what I am informed, I shall but find a parent, to be more sensible of his loss.

During our journey hither, Miss Mof-tyn obliged me with a recital of every circumstance with which she was acquainted, concerning my poor father's sudden return to England, and his present melancholy situation.

Returning home unexpectedly, he met a gentleman coming from his mistress's apartment:—fired with jealousy, he accosted him in the most opprobrious language, in consequence of which, retiring to more convenient ground they fought, and both unfortunately aimed too well; the French chevalier being killed upon the spot, and my father wounded; though not so materially as to prevent an immediate flight, in which he was accompanied by a trusty servant, who had attended him from his infancy:
it

it was this worthy creature who first proposed a return to the castle: his master at first shuddered at the idea, protesting that he would rather meet instant death than his injured wife: but honest Anthony zealously pursued his entreaties; and at length with much difficulty wrung, from him a consent to pass a short time in this neighbourhood, even though it were in disguise, in order to make enquiries into the present state of the family:—but, alas! the day after his arrival, he found himself utterly unable to proceed: his wound having been neglected, together with the perturbation and affliction of his mind, brought on a fever, from which there is not yet any hopes of his recovery. Poor Anthony, distracted at the situation of his master, seeing him unattended and unaccommodated even with the common necessities of life, ventured contrary to his repeated commands, to present himself at the castle, and make a discovery of what he had even pledged his life to conceal: at the same time assuring my mother, that her appearance, or an idea that she was

was

was acquainted with his return, would destroy the effect of every effort to relieve him. In the first moment of her astonishment and distress, she knew not how to act; but soon recollecting herself, she sent for the steward and his wife, who are elderly people, and have lived many years in the family, and for whom my father in his youth had almost a filial attachment; my mother instructed them to visit him, as having heard accidentally of his return, and to use their utmost endeavours to persuade him to remove to their house, where they could themselves attend him—and might find some opportunity of hinting to him her knowledge of his return, with her desire to visit him—all which has been done to my mother's entire satisfaction, except that the last proposal was received by my father, with horror and emotions which increased his disorder—he has however consented to see Mr. Wallace, and seems much gratified by his attendance: thank heaven! he will now want no human assistance, but all the care and medical skill

skill of the faculty will I fear prove ineffectual.

The various and fluctuating emotions which disturb my mind, on the expectation of the awful interview for which I must prepare to-morrow, destroys every hope of repose, and I would rather scribble the night away, than retire to my pillow.

I cannot help mentioning one subject which affords me infinite happiness: my mother's most sanguine expectations seem to be perfectly answered in Mr. Fitzhenry: she seldom forms hasty conclusions, but in this case, one hour appears to have sufficed for the establishment of a violent friendship—you cannot imagine how I rejoice—don't laugh, when I say a presentiment assures me, she will never have cause to change her sentiments.

My best thanks shall wait upon Lady Wilson by the next post: she will I am sure pardon the precedence I give to the first friend my heart acknowledged: in the mean time, assure her of my most respectful regards; and believe that my
dear

dear Fanny has not a more truly affectionate friend than her

LOUISA STAFFORD.

LETTER XCVI.

MISS CLIFTON TO MISS PARKER.

WE have suddenly lost the company of Lady Louisa Stafford, in consequence of the unexpected return of the Earl of Belmont, an event which would have been productive of joy and happiness to his daughter, was it not checked by the fear of losing him for ever.

A duel, in which he was involved by the inconstancy of his mistress, and in which he killed his antagonist, drove him from France : and he had but just arrived in the vicinity of his own house, when he was attacked with a violent fever, from which he is not expected to recover :—he is a sincere penitent—heaven grant his present sufferings may expiate his past offences !—The countess who is certainly more than half an angel, for-

gives and apparently forgets the injuries she has sustained.

I could, indeed, Maria perceive with half a glance the better health of your brother. The whole stile of your epistle indicated returning chearfulness, in which I most feelingly rejoice:—you cannot experience an encrease of happiness without your pilfering friend coming in for a share of the blessing: indeed I do not at present enjoy much of my own. 'Tis strange! out of the great stock of vivacity I have lost, that I cannot regain one atom.—Lady Louisa's departure has added to my stupidity, and I follow Lady Wilson into public without partaking of any amusement whatever.

We were at a rout yesterday, and who should we find there but Lord Westville,—'tis a riddle to me that we never met before: I forgot to tell your ladyship that he has entirely lost that archness which gave your penetrating ladyship an unfavourable opinion of his morals; he has exchanged it for a look of the utmost languor and softness—which I fear

I fear will not be of long duration—grief will wear off, and he will degenerate into his former self—besides he is violently in love I find, which is a wonderful restorative: his nuptials with Lady Bab Hartley, are only postponed till the period of mourning is expired—They say she is an agreeable sensible woman; yet I own I perceive nothing very striking in her appearance.

That coxcomb in the guards, I mentioned to you, is become my perpetual torment: his vanity diverted me, and I humoured it; it is very provoking that one cannot brush away these butterflies at will: I thought last night I should have died with chagrin at his impertinence; he attached himself to my elbow the moment I entered the room; and all my endeavours to get quit of him were ineffectual: that behaviour which I thought calculated to keep him at a distance, only served to increase his assurance; and he had the impudence to ask me, in the hearing of Lord Westville, (which, however, did not concern me in the least) by what part of his

conduct he had forfeited my former kindness: how he had incurred a cruelty so foreign to his hopes, the continuance of which must inevitably devote him to despair and misery. His lordship gave the fellow a look of ineffable disdain, and turned from us—I was so much confused and provoked at the insolent insinuation, that to have expressed my anger, I must have assumed the tone and language of billingsgate: I contented myself, therefore, with marking my resentment by a silent contempt.

Soon after I had the mortification, whilst I leaned over a card table, to hear the following conversation.—“ So I find
“ poor Reynolds, after hawking about
“ his sweet face to half the heiresses in
“ town, is glad at last to take up with a
“ trumpery three thousand pounder—
“ What in the name of fortune will they
“ do? After a couple of winters spent in
“ the *beau monde*, the lady may turn
“ sempstress, and the gentleman be
“ reduced to levy contributions on the
“ highway. If their mutual attachment
“ was not so very visible, I could not
“ have

“have believed it—I really thought
“Fanny Clifton had more sense.”

“She is certainly a childish giddy
“girl, but she proves herself a perfect
“idiot to refuse Lord Fitzroy, and mar-
“ry a beggar.”

“Heavens! and earth!” exclaimed a
female voice, which I knew to be Miss
Carlisle’s, “Do you take Lord Fitzroy
“for such a dupe?—No, no, he trifled
“with the girl to be sure, and flattered
“her vanity, of which she has no incon-
“siderable share, but trust me, he had
“no more intention of marrying her
“than you have.”

The conversation I believe was then
interrupted, at least I heard no more,
but perceived, upon turning my head,
that Lord Westville had been an ear-wit-
ness to it as well as myself.

Thank heaven another fortnight con-
cludes our present mode of life, which
is now become absolutely insupport-
able.

With what joy shall I revisit Exeter!
—With what ecstatic delight shall I fold
my Maria in the arms of friendship,

and exert every nerve to lighten the burden of her affliction.

What must I say for my little dog?—I must leave it to the affectionate little animal, to speak my gratitude and his own: I am sure I can't use any language more intelligent. Do my dear, for mercy's sake, deviate from your "long trodden path" of sincerity, and secure him from a discovery. 'Tis well I did not send him to my aunt—What could equal my stupidity in overlooking so obvious a circumstance?—Felix was the admiration of the whole city; I must not take him home when I return: as your dog he may pass with management; but as mine, no evasions would avail.

I write to my aunt every week, but don't hear from her once in a month—I must trouble you again to urge her to write: tell her I shall expect a line before my return, if it is but to assure me of a welcome.

Adieu, my dear; that your brother may regain his health, and you happiness,

ness, is the constant prayer of your truly affectionate,

F. CLIFTON.

LETTER XCVII.

LORD WESTVILLE TO MR. FITZHENRY.

WHY did you persuade me to come hither? or why, rather, was I fool enough to yield to your intreaties?—To humour your prodigality I became a witness of your happiness, and more sensible of my own misery—What other consequences could I expect from exposing myself to those charms by which I was enslaved; and that too when my mind was rendered more susceptible by accumulated afflictions: yet I must acknowledge that I owe thee more for the few moments of ecstasy I enjoyed under the borrowed garb of the miller's son, than can be cancelled by an age of torture: that dog Fitzroy deserved caning, if it were but for shortening my enjoyment: yet, fortunate as I was in frustrat-

ing his hellish schemes, I ought not to repine.

Overhearing a conversation between him and his infernal colleague, Mrs. Crofts, I found some plot was hatching, though I knew not of what nature, except that Fitzroy was to personate you, and that my presence was a check upon their designs.

I therefore took the first opportunity to change my dress; but when I returned, cursed my precaution, as I wandered about some time without being able to find any one of the party, and I had but just discovered Miss Clifton with the impostor, (whom I knew by his size) when they were quitting the room. I have told you all this about an hundred and fifty times, but it so entirely engrosses my mind, that you must accept of it, or nothing.

Do, my dear fellow, tell me once more, what she said of Ralph! let me have the charming sentences upon paper, that I may wear them next my heart. I wish with all my soul that she would not give an edge to impertinence by her
unthinking

unthinking flirtation with that insufferable puppy Reynolds. I know it is the result of that vivacity which is not her least charm; yet I wish in this case, that it was under some restraint, as it gives too much licence to the tongue of envy, with which she has too much beauty, too much sense, and too many exquisite perfections not to be furrounded.

That detestable Faddle, for I'm sure no name can denote him so truly, was gratifying the malignity of your old flame Miss Carlisle, at the expence of my adored Fanny—Oh! that I could have tossed the brute that moment through the window—"But break my heart, for I must hold my tongue."

My soul is not in tune for dissipation, and I would instantly quit these regions of riot, if I had not engaged myself to wait the nuptials of my old friend, Lady Bab Hartley; she is an amiable woman, and formed for the true enjoyment of the state into which she is going to enter.—We were brought up together; and designed by our wise progenitors for each other; but my regard for her, was
always

always too much of the fraternal kind, to admit of a warmer passion—indeed, she appears more calculated, in my eyes, to create esteem, than love.—She wants vivacity—and she wants beauty; besides which, had she been the object of my wishes, I could never have inspired her ladyship with a reciprocal flame: the affectionate appellation of brother, with which, from our earliest infancy, she has ever honoured me, without any injury to her peace, was the utmost I could have hoped for, and that title I gained as it were by inheritance; for upon the death of an amiable youth, of twelve years of age, who formed with us, a happy little trio; when she wept and lamented his loss, I mingled my tears with hers, crying my dear Bab, do not weep; call me brother, and endeavour to think it is only Charles you have lost instead of Frederick.—She took my advice, and from that moment we adopted the name of brother and sister: and on Monday, under the former title, I shall resign her to a man, who, I hope and believe, is worthy of her.

How

How is Lord Belmont?—How was you received by the Countess?—How did your fair companion support the emotions of her mind, upon the extraordinary cause of her recall?—And how will you bear the delay it must occasion to your happiness?—Give me a minute account of all your transactions, 'tis charity to administer comfort to the sick at heart, and there are none more truly so than yours,

WESTVILLE.

END OF THE SECOND VOLUME.